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ABSTRACT

Project Choice began with a simple goal: to increase the number of inner-city students who graduate from high school on time and become productive members of society. To that end, Ewing M. Kauffman, his Foundation, and associates designed and implemented a program that promised postsecondary education or training to some students in the Kansas City, Kansas, and Kansas City, Missouri area as an incentive to stay in school. This report details the evolution of Project Choice from its planning in 1987 through 1996, when members of the first class began graduating from 4-year institutions. The report provides a candid account of the successes and failures of Project Choice, and shows how the Project Choice experience led the Kauffman Foundation to change the way it contributes to programs for children and youth. Ten lessons from Project Choice are outlined: (1) inner city youth can succeed; (2) support services are crucial; (3) flexibility is key; (4) the attention of caring adults is more powerful than the incentive of postsecondary education; (5) kids need ongoing rewards and recognition; (6) parents count; (7) high school graduation is not an end; (8) incentive is expensive; (9) schools opt out of the game when they are not full members from the outset; and (10) permanence requires community partnership. The long-term self-sufficiency of Project Choice students is still untested, and their lives as productive workers are just beginning, but the program did meet its goal of increasing the number of students who stayed in school. Of the 1,394 students who signed Project Choice agreements, 628 went to college and 87 went to vocational, technical, or business schools. Information is also provided about program costs. (SLD)

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ED 450 161

PROJECT CHOICE™

66 LESSONS LEARNED

Partnerships • Self-sufficiency • Incentives • Motivation • High School Graduation • College Education • Caring Adults • Rewards and Recognition Flexibility • Risk-Taking • Leadership • Citizenship • Expectations

99

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INTRODUCTION

Project Choice was begun with a simple goal—

to increase the number of inner-city students who graduate from high school on time and become productive members of society.

To accomplish this end, Ewing M. Kauffman—Mr. K—and his business and Foundation associates designed and elected to test a model that used the promise of post-secondary education or training as the incentive to stay in school.

This report details the evolution of Project Choice from its planning phase in 1987 through 1996 when members of the first Choice class began graduating from four-year institutions. It describes the successes and the failures, traces the changes that were made in the program to respond to the needs of the students, their parents and the schools they attended, and presents the project outcomes. The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation hopes that a candid recounting of where it succeeded and where it did not can be of benefit to those implementing similar programs, as well as those considering the implementation of a similar program in similar circumstances.

However, a word of caution is in order. Things can be similar, but they are seldom the same. It is not true that "if you have seen one inner-city, you have seen them all." People, places, histories, economies, climates, cultures, and institutions all differ and they may be very different at different times. The Kauffman Foundation is fully cognizant that the Choice experience was limited to two models that were tested in one greater metropolitan area. The Choice history does not represent the final word on "incentive-based dropout programming," but it does make an informed contribution to the field both in terms of program content and program process.

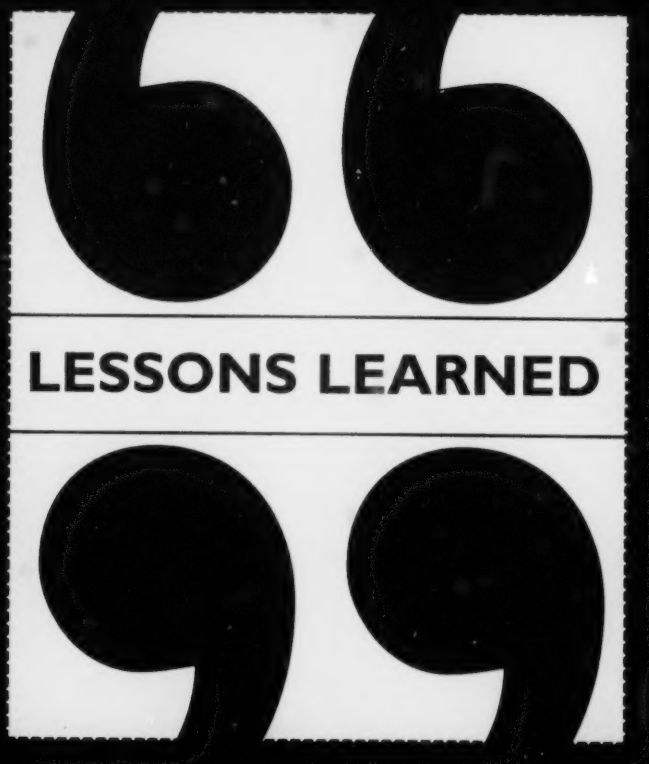
What the Kauffman Foundation learned from the program has fundamentally changed the way the Youth Development division of the Kauffman Foundation views the way it can make the most significant contribution to the healthy development of the nation's children and youths. The fundamental lesson the Foundation learned is that its effectiveness depends upon building strong partnerships with others who share its vision of self sufficient people in healthy communities.

The long-term self-sufficiency of the Project Choice students—the "Kauffman Kids"— is still untested and their lives as productive workers who give back to their communities are just beginning. We are confident that their life stories will be powerful ones. We are honored to have traveled with them this far.

Robert B. Rogers
Chairman The Ewing M. Kauffman Foundation

Tom Rhone
Senior Director Project Choice

PROJECT CHOICE



EXECUTIVE
SUMMARY

Lessons Project Choice taught us-

The 10 Lessons listed below grew out of the Kauffman Foundation's operation of Project Choice between 1987 and 1996 in Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas. The Choice report provides a historical record of the implementation of Project Choice along with analyses of the major outcomes and findings. The Foundation hopes that others can use this material to *consider, test, examine,* and *measure* the Project Choice experience against their local realities and practices.

• **Inner City Kids Can Succeed**

but

• **Support Services are Crucial**

and

• **Flexibility is Key**

(Expect the Unexpected).

Furthermore,

• The Attention of Caring Adults is More Powerful Than the Incentive of Post-secondary Education.

And, never forget that

• Kids Need Ongoing Rewards and Recognition,

• Parents Count,

and

• High School Graduation is Not an End.

Also, don't be surprised that

• Incentive is Expensive.

• Schools Opt Out of the Game When They Are Not Full Team Members from the Outset.

and

• Permanence Requires Community Partnership.

The Fundamental Number One Lesson: Inner-City Kids Can Succeed.

Ewing Kauffman was right. Despite the barriers of poverty, inner-city "at risk" young people can be put on the road to becoming productive members of society if they receive good educations.

However, the barriers of poverty are powerful and pervasive, more serious and complicated than Mr. K or his Planning Team imagined when they designed the original model. Far too often, by the time inner-city youngsters reach ninth grade their self image as learners and intellectual beings has been seriously diminished. Many begin to fall behind as early as the third grade, the point at which reading for content becomes more important than learning how to read. A motivational, hands-on, high school program such as Project Choice—built on the sustained, personal attention of caring adults—can inspire young people to stay in school and give "learning" a second try, but not all the students will succeed in making up their skills deficits.

The Lessons LEARNED

Of the 1,394 students who signed Project Choice Agreements between 1988 and 1992,

- 147 moved out of the participating school districts,
- 397 dropped out of school,
- 78 did not graduate on time, and
- 767 did graduate on time.

Of the 767 who graduated on time, 709 continued their educations.

- Of those, 322 enrolled in two-year community colleges or went on for vocational, technical or business training.
- Another 387 enrolled in four year colleges.
- Forty-seven of those who continued their educations after high school have graduated and 279 are still enrolled in post-secondary institutions.
- Seven of those 47 graduates are currently enrolled or about to enroll in graduate schools.

The high school retention rates of the first cohorts of Choice students in both Missouri and Kansas were not better than the retention rates of students in the comparison groups. However, students who participated in subsequent cohorts that benefited from expanded services did complete more years of education than the comparison groups. It is likely that these individuals will be more productive than they would have been without Project Choice.

Nonetheless, the Foundation learned that sponsors of programs like Project Choice should expect that ninth grade interventions will result in highly diverse outcomes that depend on the students' baseline skills and achievement levels as well as the degree to which they are affected by complex family, social, health and societal problems. Despite the many program refinements and improvements that the Foundation made in response to the students' needs, it learned that the most that could be achieved with any one cohort was a 55-60 percent high school graduation rate.

Lesson Two: Support Services Are Crucial.

Complex family problems and life issues that stand in the way of learning emerged full force from day one of the program. These included homelessness, abuse, health problems and risky peer group activity. Many inner-city ninth graders have suffered life-long neglect of physical, academic and social needs. Therefore, programs designed to intervene in their lives at this relatively late date must be prepared to make major investments in academic, health and social support services for the students and their families.

I do think we could do i better if we had it to do over again. The trouble with this work is you almo never get to do it again. And that's why it's so important to get the lessons down and be pre- pared to share them with other people.

Carl Mitchell
Director of Strategic Planning
The Ewing M. Kauffman Foundation

Project Choice learned that it had to devote fully 80 percent of its budget to social support services during the high school phase of the effort.

Lesson Three: Flexibility is Key: Be Prepared to Change.

"Bent knees" and open minds were requisites for all Choice staff. No two days were the same and no two students were alike. The unexpected lurked around every corner. The daily demands of the project called for an open and flexible approach. Staff had to respond simultaneously to the students' ever-changing needs in and outside the classroom, to the concerns of the schools and to the requirements of a broad range of agencies to which they were making student and family referrals. Judgments often had to be made on the spot. Responsible risk taking was a necessary staff attribute.

Project Choice managers learned that they should think, "How can we do better?" instead of "What are we doing wrong?" The "Can Do" mind set promoted prompt responses to challenges and problems and led to timely adjustment of practice and process.

Lesson Four: The Attention of Caring Adults is More Powerful Than the Incentive of Post Secondary Education.

Teenagers tend to be more comfortable with immediate—or at least short-term—gratification than with long range plans. Eighth graders, therefore, do not find the concept of college or some other reward "five years from now" particularly compelling. Many, however, are starved for adult attention and guidance. Sustained contact with Choice staff, mentors and tutors, along with Mr. K's personal involvement, sent a message to the Choice kids that they were important and that many somebodies cared.

The Foundation learned that caring, tutoring and mentoring—along with high expectations and behavior requirements for Project Choice participation—paid off handsomely in reducing drug abuse and keeping kids in school. They had no discernible impact on the rate of teen pregnancy nor on absenteeism as outlined in the goals and expectations section.

On the other hand, as students progressed from one grade to the next, college or other career training did assume increased importance for those who were making the greatest academic improvements. These students gained self-confidence and hope. They dared to dream, they began to see education as worthwhile in and of itself, and they began to believe that they could go on beyond high school, that a college education was an achievable goal. At that point in their development, the scholarship incentive became a real incentive.

Lesson Five: Kids Need On-Going Rewards and Recognition.

Mr. K was one of the first to realize that the incoming ninth graders were not strongly influenced by a scholarship incentive "down the road." He took matters into his own hands when he created the dollar incentive to increase attendance and, later, the Investment Club. Thereafter, the staff looked for ways to make Choice special and make Choice fun. They planned family dinners with Mr. K. They organized picnics and field trips and softball games with teachers, parents, and staff. In Kansas they placed emphasis on activities that would bring together the students from all the five high schools. At Westport High School in Missouri they funded a school supply store and inaugurated a "Scholars for Dollars" incentive through which Choice students earned points for excellent performance and could purchase supplies with their points. And, of course, they planned festive graduation nights and graduation parties.

In the first year, the Foundation learned that programs like Project Choice compete with peer group pressure and other powerful influences in the students' lives. The success of Choice-like programs requires consistent and active support that creates a sense of belonging. Teenagers tend to be tribal: left on their own, they form cliques and gangs. Therefore, it behooves dropout prevention programs to create systems of visible benefits that will make them the preferred "good gangs" of choice.

Lesson Six: Parents Count.

Children cannot be considered apart from the family situations in which they live. Programs like Choice must develop strong relationships with the parents and guardians of the students and find incentives to sustain parental cooperation in fulfilling the program requirements.

Obviously, all families are not alike and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to parent involvement, although all activities and events should contribute to building an *esprit de corps* and sense of pride in the project.

Some parents became involved because of the family services available through Project Choice. Others were drawn in by the regular meetings, workshops and retreats that helped them with decision-making, communication and parenting skills. Still others were most comfortable with field trips, ceremonies and celebrations.

Project Choice taught three lessons about parent involvement:

- *Parents are more likely to participate in activities that are useful to them and address their concerns and needs.*
- *Parents are more likely to participate in activities that take place on neutral turf away from the school—at times that fit their schedules, on subjects that meet their needs, when child care is provided, and when refreshments are available.*
- *It takes a tremendous amount of time and effort to organize the wide array of services and activities that appeal to parents. A staff person whose primary responsibility is parent outreach and service is a necessity. However, even with a Parent Activity Coordinator, it is not easy to maintain the long-term involvement of low-income parents, many of whom are overwhelmed with survival issues.*

Lesson Seven: High School Graduation Is Not The End.

Project Choice, and programs like it, do not end with the high school cap and gown. The Foundation learned that programs that are meant to be more than drop-out prevention efforts, that set out to encourage and support students through post-secondary education, require a minimum commitment of eight years to any one class of students and the addition of three strong program components.

First, there must be a comprehensive effort to assist those high school students who are post-secondary bound. They need help in test-taking, in evaluating career options, and in researching institutions and making applications. Equally important is preparation for the tremendous social adjustment of leaving home and functioning in an unfamiliar and less structured academic environment. A major lesson learned involved the necessity of giving students the tools to deal with the discrimination and prejudice some may encounter when, for the first time in their young lives, they move out into a racially and ethnically diverse world.

Second, the Foundation learned that Choice-like programs must not only prepare students for the stresses of college life, they must also maintain an on-going support system to help students successfully negotiate the academic and social challenges of the next educational level.

Third, the Foundation learned that those Choice students who do not go on to college or vocational school need help entering the workplace.

And finally, a finding now coming to light—even when tuition, room, board and books are paid, students have to work long hours while in school to cover other expenses. Exit interviews are beginning to indicate that some students are failing because the hours they have to spend working are taking too much away from their study time.

Lesson Eight: Incentive Is Expensive.

As many middle class parents have learned, preparing children to be productive citizens is a time-consuming, non-stop, twenty-two-year-long job and putting even one child through college is a very costly undertaking. It is no surprise then that assisting low-income youngsters—many of whom come from troubled circumstances—to graduate from high school, to prepare for post-secondary education, and to graduate from college, carries a sizable price tag.

By the year 2001, when the last cohort of "Kauffman Kids" will have graduated from colleges, universities, or other institutions of higher learning, Project Choice will have spent $4.5 million in high school support, $5.2 million in post-secondary support, and $12.7 million for scholarships for a grand total of $22.4 million.

In 1995, Midwest Research Institute (MRI) was commissioned to do a cost benefit analysis of two Project Choice classes to determine whether or not the Choice program (with its goal of motivating students to complete high school) would have a monetary benefit to society in terms of level of taxes paid by Choice graduates as compared to individuals who do not complete high school. The study, which is described in greater detail in the Appendices, was based on high school graduation only. It revealed that each class will contribute $ .3 million more to the tax base than students in their classes not receiving a high school degree. These two classes alone will be responsible for creating about $600,000 in incremental state and local tax revenue.

Lesson Nine: Schools Opt Out of the Game When They Are Not Full Team Members.

Project Choice was designed to avoid running afoul of the complex bureaucracy and multi-level regulations of the public school systems. The Planning Team believed that an independent model that cooperated with a school system but was not integrated into its structure would be more efficient and effective in getting the job done. Furthermore, they believed that the Project Choice example would naturally promote overall school improvement. It was a reasonable hypothesis.

The school systems in Missouri and Kansas entered into collaboration with the Kauffman Foundation in good faith.

The goals of the project were laudable, it held the potential of favorable visibility and, best of all, it would cost them little in the way of time or money.

What the Foundation learned was that the majority of the involved schools felt little responsibility for a program that had not involved them in its planning and design. The School Districts handed Choice over to the schools and the schools did their duty, but few felt a sense of ownership and most were not clear regarding expected outcomes since the Foundation and the Districts had not established "mutually desired outcomes." Moreover, the teacher development component of Choice was added well after the program was underway and, therefore, was less effective than hoped for.

Project Choice had a deep and positive impact on the individual students it served and the staff that worked with the students. It also had a positive influence on individual teachers who benefited from the professional development. Sadly, Choice did not leave an on-going legacy at Westport High School and its impact on the Kansas schools was mixed. Those schools that had stable administrations and a prior commitment to school reform are doing a better job with their students. Others demonstrate little change.

The hardest lesson that the Foundation learned is this one: If a program is to have a long-term impact on how schools conduct business, it must involve teachers and principals early on so they can develop a sense of commitment and ownership. Without that commitment and ownership, a program lives only as long as the sponsor keeps it afloat; when the sponsor leaves, the program sinks without a trace.

Lesson Ten: Permanence Requires Community Partnership.

All programs, and expensive programs in particular, benefit from having visible and respected "champions." Project Choice owes its success not only to Mr. K's financial support, but also to the personal way in which he led it and related to the participants.

What hindsight reveals is that Project Choice did not have the deep involvement and commitment of the larger community. Choice was looked upon favorably but it was viewed as Mr. K's project, not theirs. They didn't have to pay for it and they didn't have to do anything about it. Although one can point to some outstanding examples of assistance, there was no widespread shared or mutual responsibility for Project Choice.

Programs like Choice are often described as "Rich Men's Programs," models that can be sustained only by billionaires and, therefore, are not widely replicable. In truth, programs like this one are possible when and if community leadership and community groups form partnerships to encourage, support, and sponsor young people. We know that the models work and the money exists within the private and public sectors. What we do not yet know is how to build effective coalitions. We do not yet know how to organize families, the business community, the religious community, the philanthropic community, school districts, schools, teachers and counselors and related governmental institutions, to share a common commitment to student success. But we can learn if we are so motivated.

In Sum

Many of the lessons the Foundation learned are not original discoveries. Others working in the field of dropout prevention have ascended the same learning curves and arrived at similar conclusions. There is a valuable body of practical knowledge available, but Project Choice moved ahead too quickly to benefit fully from it.

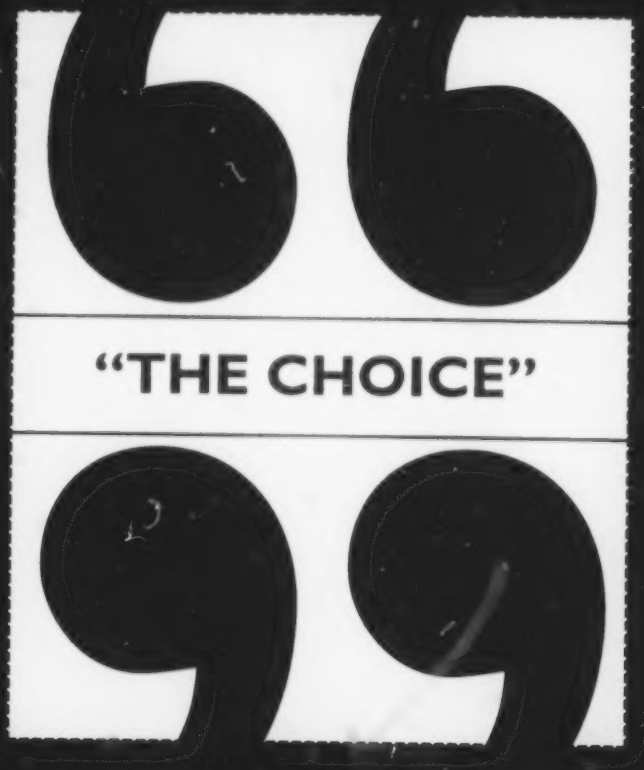
Therefore, the overarching lesson and advice that Choice shares with its readers is this:

Set aside a generous planning period to involve all the stakeholders, seek their advice and input, and elicit their buy-in. At the same time, fully explore the field. Visit similar programs and analyze their allocations of time and dollars. Study the literature, read the pertinent evaluations, and consult with the experts on inner-city youth and their families—scholars and practitioners alike. A rigorous planning process does not guarantee a problem-free project, but it identifies potential pitfalls, flags risks, suggests options for how to proceed and, to some extent, avoids reinventing the wheel. It is unlikely that even an informed staff working with informed stakeholders will create an initial model that is perfect, but it is likely that building on the experience of others will produce an initial program design that is better.

With respect and humility, the Kauffman Foundation offers *The Story of Project Choice* as a case history of success and travail from which others can learn and profit.

# # #

THE MAN WHO MADE



The MAN who made "THE CHOICE"

Ewing Marion Kauffman—"Mr. K"—was one of this century's outstanding entrepreneurs, a man whose life story rivals fiction. Raised in modest surroundings, he developed and honed his natural skills as a salesman while still in his teens. After a stint in the Navy during World War II, he returned home and went to work as a salesman with a pharmaceutical company. His remarkable ability to promote products and produce sales proved to be both a career plus and a career minus: when his annual commissions totaled more than the company executives' annual salaries, they responded by reducing and shifting his sales territories. Convinced that his talent and hard work were not being rewarded, he resigned and founded Marion Laboratories, preparing products in his home basement by night and selling them by day. The $36,000 in gross sales realized by the fledgling enterprise in its first year yielded a net profit of $1,000. Today, sales of the Marion diversified health care products business—led by Ewing Kauffman until 1989 when Marion Laboratories merged with Merrill Dow—exceed $3 billion annually.

Mr. K informally characterized the elements of successful entrepreneurship as:

- A dream that can be transformed into a mission and vision,
- A plan with goals and practical strategies to achieve the vision,
- A willingness to assume risks,
- The intuition to identify leadership and targets of opportunity,
- Constant analysis of results and flexibility to respond to change,
- Concentration and hard work, and
- Luck—the wild card in the deck.

Mr. K did not limit his formidable entrepreneurial skills to Marion Laboratories. He brought them to his community work and, in later years when he had both time and wealth, to major league baseball and his philanthropic endeavors.

Always a generous man, Mr. K's involvement in formal philanthropy began in 1966 when he established The Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation. His vision for the Foundation was developed in response to a question posed by Marion's then chief financial officer and executive vice-president, Mike Herman, who asked, "What do you want to do with your money?"

In essence, Mr. K's answer was distilled into the "vision" of the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation—

- *"Self-sufficient people in healthy communities."*

He envisioned the Foundation's "mission" as twofold—

- *To research and identify the unfulfilled needs of society, and*
- *To develop, implement and/or fund breakthrough solutions that will have a lasting impact and offer people a choice and hope for the future.*

The strategies he proposed for achieving the vision were—

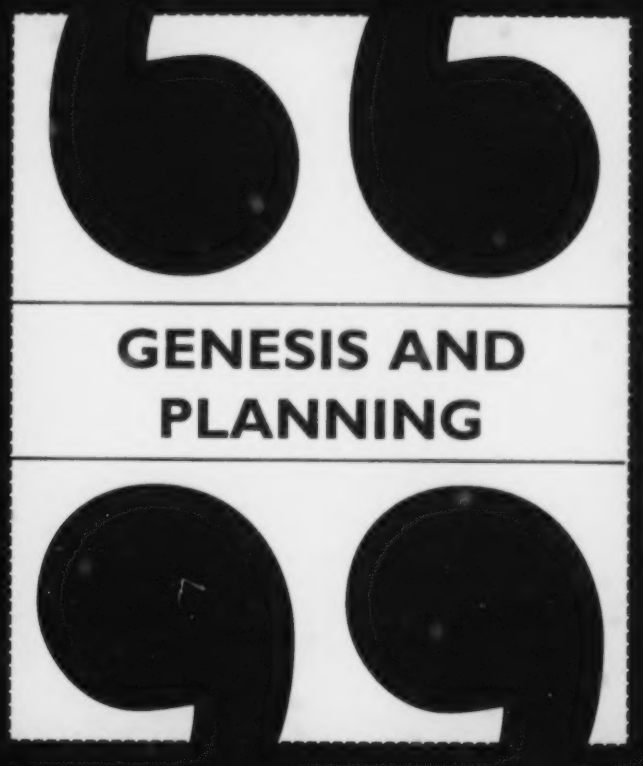
- *Stimulating the growth of entrepreneurship in America.*
- *Helping at-risk children and youth become productive members of society.*

All of the early Kauffman Foundation programs reflected Mr. K's hands-on approach to problem solving. They were directly operated by the Foundation, based on the research and development model used in the pharmaceutical industry. Those first four programs, now referred to as "Mr. K's Legacy Programs," are—

- Project STAR, a youth drug and alcohol prevention program,
- Project ESSENTIAL, a program to teach ethics and fundamental values to children K through 12,
- Project Early, a family program to promote healthy child development prenatal to entrance into Kindergarten, and
- Project Choice, a high school drop-out prevention program and the subject of this report.

# # #

PROJECT CHOICE



1987-1988

13

Project Choice: Its Genesis and Planning

1987-1988: The Planning Years

STEP ONE— ESTABLISHING The Mission and Vision

Project Choice grew out of Ewing Marion Kauffman's deep-seated belief that, despite the barriers of poverty, young people could become productive members of society if they received a good education. Alarmed by the rising dropout rates in urban high schools, and particularly disturbed that Westport High School, his alma mater, had one of the worst dropout rates in Kansas City, Mr. K began talking with Mike Herman and others in the late 1980s about what the Kauffman Foundation could do to change things. Project Choice, its mission and its vision, were based on the philosophical framework developed in those discussions.

The Philosophical Framework For Project Choice

Mr. K believed that a good education was priceless, the surest way out of poverty and into a decent job and productive citizenship. He was dismayed at reports of young people who were dropping out of school, who saw no connection between today's school work and tomorrow's success, who were convinced that there was no hope for their futures. He understood that those who are without hope for the future see no reason to plan, to aspire, to work hard, to risk, or even to try. Mr. K believed firmly in the power of hope as a motivator. Project Choice, with its promise of a post-secondary education, was expected to offer young people hope for their futures.

The Project Choice Mission Statement

To design innovative educational programs for economically disadvantaged youth, allowing them the opportunity

- to make a *choice* about their future,
- to become productive in our society,
- to live a better life, and
- to empower them to give something back to the local community.

The Project Choice Vision Statement

Low-income, "at-risk" youth becoming productive members of our society.

STEP TWO— DEVELOPING The Plan

- **SETTING GOALS**
- **IDENTIFYING EXPECTATIONS**
- **DEVISING PRACTICAL STRATEGIES**

Mr. K understood that the first order of business was research. Someone had to troll the waters to see what was going on in the field of dropout prevention. Mr. K's first priority, therefore, was finding the right person to explore and evaluate options. At this juncture, luck—the element Mr. K listed as the wild-card component of entrepreneurial success—played a central role in the evolution of Project Choice. Mike Herman reminded Mr. K that there just happened to be within the Marion organization an Associate, Tom Rhone, whose entire life and career path had prepared him to participate in an initiative like Choice.

Tom Rhone had been raised in a family that expected him to carry on its tradition of hard work, academic excellence, and a college education. He became a teacher and later a high school principal in the Kansas City, Kansas system. In 1984 he joined Marion Laboratories as a corporate recruiter.

Moving on Herman's suggestion, Mr. K shared the Project Choice vision with a highly receptive and enthusiastic Tom Rhone, and then dispatched Rhone to do the necessary background research. Rhone's assignment was to survey and evaluate programs and bring back a proposal for how to help inner-city youths become productive members of society. Rhone investigated a number of promising demonstrations that were testing new models to decrease high school dropout rates. He was especially impressed with Eugene Lang's "I Have a Dream" program, which promised a college education to students from one of New York City's poor neighborhoods, and a similar project in Tennessee sponsored by Avron Fogelman, Mr. K's one-time partner with the Kansas City Royals.

Based on these visits and other research, Mr. K, Tom Rhone, Mike Herman and Carl Mitchell, Marion's director of strategic financial analysis, developed the initial goals, expectations and a strategic plan for Project Choice.

The Project Choice Goal

Project Choice's goal was straightforward—to increase the number of low-income, inner city students who graduate from high school on time and who become productive members of society.

The Project Choice Expectations

Overall, Project Choice was expected to improve educational and employment opportunities for urban youngsters, but the planning team shared expectations that were even more specific. They expected that Project Choice would also—

- Improve students' attendance rates
- Improve students' grades
- Encourage superior academic performance
- Improve students' perceptions and attitudes about school
- Decrease the number of disciplinary problems, suspensions and expulsions and improve student conduct
- Improve students' social skills
- Decrease the use of illegal drugs
- Decrease pregnancy rates during the high school years

The Original Project Choice Plan

Mr. K and his Planning Team envisioned a program with strong tutoring and mentoring components that would use the guarantee of post-secondary education as the incentive to work hard and stay in school. Loosely based on the Lang and Fogelman incentive models, Project Choice would be more inclusive. It would offer the opportunity and choice of attending college, vocational or technical school according to the students' interests and prior academic preparation. It would also demand high levels of accountability from the students and their families: students would have to meet specified behavioral standards to remain in the program. When students enrolled they, and their parents or guardians, would attend agreement-signing ceremonies to commit to program regulations. The same signed agreement would legally bind the Kauffman Foundation to honor its financial commitment.

The Project Choice Agreement

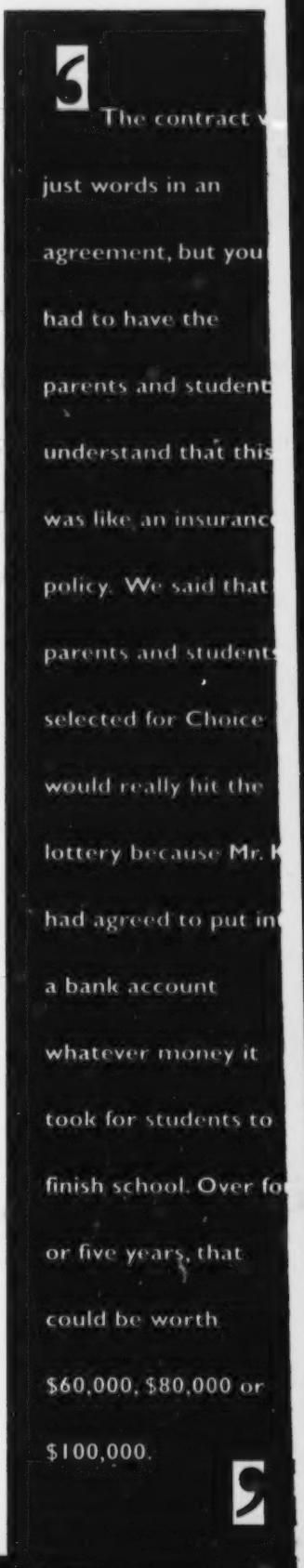
The Project Choice Agreement is predicated on three beliefs:

- An educational support system that encourages academic and social development *"is essential to a stronger society and to the greater Kansas City community."*
- Project Choice could encourage at-risk youth to become *"productive members of society who, because of better education, can enjoy a higher standard of living and quality of life."*
- And, *"excellent opportunities for furthering one's education after high school exist in the cities of Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas and elsewhere within the states of Missouri and Kansas whether it be at a vocational or technical school or within a college or university setting."*

Student Requirements

Students would agree to—

- Remain in school and graduate on time, completing all requirements of their respective school district
- Maintain excellent conduct in school and the community, avoiding disciplinary problems, suspensions and expulsions at school
- Actively participate in tutoring programs sponsored by Project Choice
- Abstain from the use of illegal drugs and avoid the use of alcohol
- Submit to random, unannounced drug testing (Any student who declined, or tested positive for drugs, would be removed from the program.)
- Avoid parenthood and attend counseling sessions sponsored by Project Choice and administered by school or outside counselors
- If enrolled in college or accredited vocational or technical programs, take at least the required minimum number of classes and maintain satisfactory grades
- Complete post-secondary programs within specified timelines



Requirements for Parents and Guardians

As active participants in their children's educations, parents and guardians would agree to—

- Monitor their student's academic progress throughout high school and beyond
- Attend activities sponsored by the Kauffman Foundation, including
  - — meetings with Kauffman Foundation representatives
  - — conferences with teachers or counselors
  - — teacher/parent activities at students' schools

STEP THREE— Laying The Groundwork

- **ASSUMING RISK**
- **IDENTIFYING LEADERSHIP**
- **IDENTIFYING A TARGET OF OPPORTUNITY**
- **POSITIONING CHOICE**

The Risk

The risks inherent in launching Project Choice were high. The potential long-term investment was substantial and none of the comparable college incentive programs had been rigorously evaluated. They were too new to show any long-term results and little was known about how, why or to what extent similar programs worked, but common sense supported the concept and Mr. K and his planning team agreed that Project Choice was worth the risks.

The Leadership

By the close of the planning phase, it was a foregone conclusion that the best candidate to lead the demonstration was Tom Rhone. A natural leader, Rhone commands attention and respect. He knows the community and the educational establishment. A skilled communicator, he listens, he inspires, and he conveys caring and concern. And, when tough is needed, Tom Rhone can deliver it.

The Target of Opportunity

The target of opportunity was Westport High School, Mr. K's alma mater. Mr. K believed that if Project Choice could work in the school with one of the worst dropout rates in the metropolitan area, it could work anywhere. Furthermore, Westport offered the racial and ethnic diversity that increases the value of a demonstration program: 60 percent of the students were African American, 20 percent were Hispanic, and the remaining 20 percent were Asian or Caucasian.

Positioning Choice

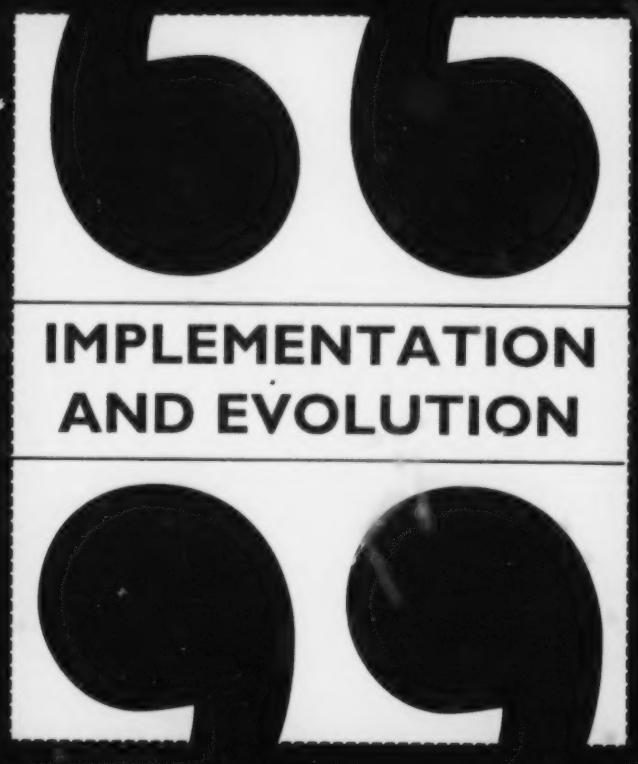
Project Choice was positioned as an independent operating program of the Ewing M. Kauffman Foundation that would communicate and cooperate with Westport High School, but would not be formally integrated into the school structure. This arrangement was chosen to insulate the program from the complex bureaucracy of public education—further complicated in 1988 by the fact that the entire Kansas City, Missouri system was functioning under a Federal Desegregation Order.

Although the project was intentionally planned to be independent of the school system, the Planning Team hypothesized that involving whole classes in a "once-in-a-lifetime opportunity" would inevitably have a positive impact on the outlook, culture, educational expectations and excellence of the Westport teachers, administrators, students and parents.

Once the program design had been sketched out, Mr. K was eager to move ahead. He personally called and invited George Garcia, the Kansas City, Missouri Superintendent of Schools, to meet with him. Mr. K explained the program to Garcia and offered to institute Project Choice in Westport High School in the fall. The Superintendent responded positively, as did the Westport principal, who agreed to designate "Project Choice Teachers" to work with the Choice students. Thus the stage was set to test the original Project Choice model.

# # #

PROJECT CHOICE



1988-PRESENT

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The First Model

The "Whole School" Model offered Project Choice participation to all ninth graders at Westport High School. It had three basic elements:

√ The Choice Agreement—Signed by students, parents and the Kauffman Foundation, it bound the Kauffman Foundation to pay for the students' post secondary tuition, books, room and board *if* the students stayed in school, graduated on time with their class and met stipulated academic and behavioral standards, and *if* their parents met conditions related to strong support of their children and consistent participation in Choice activities.

√ Choice Enrichment Classes—Conducted daily by Project Choice Teachers designated by the Westport principal, the classes were expected to improve the students' social and academic skills, to reinforce the behavioral aspects of the Choice Agreement, and to encourage an *esprit de corps* among the Choice students.

√ Parents' Meetings—Organized by Choice staff, they were expected to sustain parental interest, to help parents understand the choices their children could make, and to improve parent/student communication so families could work together to fulfill Choice goals and obligations.

Program Year One- September 1988-June 1989

Three elements were phased in during the first year in response to evolving needs:

√ The School, College and University Partnerships (SCUP)—Organized with the University of Missouri, it provided volunteer tutors to work to improve the basic math and reading skills of the the Choice ninth graders and the Westport Middle School eighth graders, all of whom would be eligible for the next year's Choice program.

√ The Choice Advisory Board—Comprised of Choice parents, educators from UMKC and representatives from the philanthropic community to track Choice progress on a monthly basis, the Board provided outside advice and counsel to the Kauffman Foundation.

√ *Report Card*—Published quarterly, the Project Choice newsletter was distributed to Choice students and families, local educators, teachers, foundations and community leaders to reinforce the students' and parents' identification with Choice and to give the project visibility in the community.

Project Choice
its Implementation and Evolution

1988-1989: PROGRAM YEAR ONE—
• THE WESTPORT "WHOLE SCHOOL" MODEL

Recruitment

By the spring of 1988, Project Choice had the stated commitment of the local Superintendent of Schools and the Principal of Westport High School. Now Mr. K was ready to make his offer to the students themselves. He went to Westport Middle School to explain the program to the eighth grade students and their parents. Presenting it as a "stay in school" program—not a "college education program"—he emphasized the importance of education, of choosing a fulfilling career, and obtaining the training for that career, whether on a university, technical, or vocational level. He promised that the Kauffman Foundation would pay post-secondary tuition, books, academic fees and reasonable room and board for every student who enrolled in and completed Project Choice.

On April 11, 1988, 250 Westport Middle School eighth graders and their parents gathered to sign Project Choice Agreements. In September 1988, 200 students entered Westport High School as the first cohort of "Kauffman Kids." Fifty of the 250 who had signed the Agreements chose to enroll in the new magnet schools instead of Westport. (Although School District officials assured the Foundation that Westport would not become a magnet school until the Project Choice demonstration was completed, it did become a business and technology magnet school just two years later, thereby causing problems for Choice students who were interested in pursuing a more liberal curriculum after graduation. At that time, however, most Choice students chose to stay at Westport High, despite its conversion to magnet status, because they were committed to the Choice program and the promised scholarships.)

The Basic Program Design

All Project Choice students were required to attend a daily class, which Westport High School referred to as "Basic Skills Class." Led by Project Choice Teachers, it was designed to strengthen the students' connection with the project by:

- providing a forum for disseminating project information,
- having Project Choice teachers work on academic, study and social skills with students, and
- organizing and leading special events, including field trips and media presentations.

There was no required curriculum, but it was expected that academic skills and study skills would be emphasized. Teachers were trusted to plan methods and content that would best meet the needs, interests and skills of their students. Activities included full class discussions and brainstorming about issues that affect teenagers, individual activities that required students to report all the information they could find on selected colleges or universities, and reflection on past and future goals. Overall, Project Choice Teachers settled into the role of "teacher as coach" and tried to guide students toward self-development in academic and social domains.

The First Program Modification: A Tutoring and Mentoring Component

Shortly after school opened in 1988, it became evident that the majority of the Choice participants were achieving below grade level and the Choice teachers could not even hope to close the gap in an hour a day. To meet the need for intensive and

> "The press were there, so the kids saw themselves on television. They were proud that they were 'Kauffman Kids.' There was a dramatic change in the physical appearance of the school. The hallways were clean. The school spirit and pride changed—even the damn football team got better."
>
> **Mike Herman**
> Board of Directors
> The Ewing M. Kauffman Foundation

individualized academic reinforcement, the School University Partnership (SCUP) was organized with the University of Missouri, Kansas City (UMKC). More than sixty UMKC students joined the project as tutors and role models for the Choice participants and the Westport Middle School eighth graders, potential participants for subsequent Choice classes. Tutors were available at both Westport High School and Middle School throughout the school day, thanks to a Kauffman Foundation van that ferried tutors between the University and Westport.

Sustaining Momentum

Mr. K, an outstanding salesman and a devoted sports fan, understood the role momentum plays in the success of any endeavor. Therefore, he supported two additional project components designed to maintain enthusiasm and a sense of involvement:

- *Report Card*, the Project Choice newsletter, was published and distributed to all the parents and students, to local educators and teachers, and to foundations and community leaders who were interested in Project Choice and its goals.
- Parent Meetings were scheduled on a regular basis to sustain family interest and help parents and students make better and more informed choices. Choice staff, high school counselors, administrators and community leaders led discussions about attendance, core curriculum requirements for college and/or vocational school, and the requirements of specific career options. Staff also organized Family Meetings to help parents and students improve their communication skills and understand the ways in which they could work together to meet their goals.

Outside Advice, Counsel and Evaluation

Mr. K and his Planning Team had designed Project Choice by applying common sense to Tom Rhone's research on drop-out prevention programs. Never did they assume that they had all the answers. They expected new challenges and new questions and recognized that their responses would guide and restructure the program.

They also knew that ongoing observation, evaluation and input from diverse and external viewpoints play a central role in the evolution of a program that would be adapting to changing environments and needs. To insure that the Foundation received adequate feedback on the expressed needs and experiences of its clients and consumers—the students, parents, teachers and project managers participating in Project Choice—two formal mechanisms were put in place:

- The Choice Advisory Board was organized in October 1988. It included Choice parents, educators from UMKC and representatives of the philanthropic community. Project Choice staff reported monthly to the Advisory Board to seek advice and counsel.
- Internal and external evaluation began in 1991, when the program was three years old.

(A listing and brief description of the thirty-four Project Choice evaluations can be found in the Appendices.)

> "Mr. K was a real math whiz and he'd play math games with the kids around his table at the company. He'd say, 'What's four times four, then triple eight, and subtract two and cube this. . . ' and the kids would be just awestruck. Tom planted some really sharp kids in math in there once, but he beat them, Mr. K did. He'd build high expectations for them and lift the kids up."
>
> **Bob Rogers** Chairman
> The Ewing M. Kauffman Foundation

First-Year Findings and Results

The start-up year demonstrated some positive results:

- The dropout rate decreased after the first year.
- Parents supported and were involved in the program, but not as many or as regularly as had been expected.

At the same time, it was clear that the "barriers of poverty" that Project Choice was designed to overcome were proving to be higher and stronger than anticipated:

- It was increasingly evident that family issues often hindered students' ability to achieve. Not all, but many students were affected by the depressing or discouraging conditions that result from and are exacerbated by poverty. Half of the Choice students lived in female-headed households, ten percent with adults other than their parents, and a few were in shelters. Furthermore, some of the parents themselves were high school dropouts who did not recognize the value of or need for post-secondary education and did not know how to motivate or guide their children in this new direction.
- Grade averages did not show marked improvement overall. The majority of the ninth grade students did not understand basic math concepts and most were reading on fourth, fifth and sixth-grade levels. However, students who most likely would have dropped out before Choice were motivated to stay in school, attend classes and be tutored. Many were "catching up" but they were not excelling academically.
- All too often, neighborhood and non-Project Choice peers encouraged antisocial or destructive behaviors. Some of the Choice students were already being drawn by the lure of the street and the instant gratification it appeared to offer.
- A very significant finding during the first year was that the Project Choice Teachers were being overwhelmed with students' and families' social, economic and health issues. Teachers needed substantial assistance if they were to provide the sustained support and caring as well as the professional referrals that so many of their students required.

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The Second Year's Model

Program Year Two included the following elements developed in Year One:

- √ The Choice Agreement
- √ Choice Enrichment Classes
- √ Parents' Meetings
- √ The School, College and University Partnerships (SCUP)
- √ The Choice Advisory Board
- √ *Report Card*

Program Year Two- September 1989-June 1990

A new "small group" model was introduced as an alternative to the "whole school" Westport model. The "small group" model randomly selected 30 low-income students annually from each of five high schools in Kansas City, Kansas.

Five additional new program elements expanded the overall benefits and scope of services provided through both models—

- √ A Home School Coordinator—to assist Project Choice Teachers to deal with student and family social issues and to handle child advocacy and referral to service agencies
- √ A Project Coordinator—to organize parental outreach and activities, arrange drug testing and edit the *Report Card*
- √ A Monetary Incentive—to decrease absenteeism
- √ An Investment Club—to familiarize Project Choice students, parents, and school and project staff with the process and benefits of prudent investment
- √ A Kansas City, Kansas, District Coordinator—to coordinate activities among the five high schools.

1989-90: Program Year Two—

- **ADJUSTING THE "WHOLE SCHOOL" MODEL**
- **ADDING A "SMALL GROUP" MODEL**

In May 1989, 248 Westport Middle School eighth graders and their parents or guardians signed Project Choice Agreements. In September they entered Westport High School as ninth graders, bringing the Westport High School Choice enrollment to 425.

Three More Modifications in the "Whole School" Model

Project Choice staff responded to the seriousness of the family and environment issues that emerged in the first program year by making three program modifications:

- A Home School Coordinator was hired to assist and support the Project Choice Teachers, to help them deal with the diverse and complex family issues they were addressing. Her role rapidly expanded to include direct child advocacy and referral to support services.
- A Project Coordinator was added to plan and promote activities that would draw the parents more closely into the program and build an *esprit de corps* among them. Activities included ceremonies, retreats, and field trips, all designed to instill pride of ownership in those associated with Project Choice. She also arranged drug testing and edited the newsletter.
- An immediate monetary incentive was added to the long-term incentive of fully paid post secondary education. This modification grew out of Mr. K's concern that more students were not signing up for Choice. Ever the hands-on manager, he drove himself up to Westport High School and asked students who were hanging out why they weren't in class, learning? They answered that it wasn't their job. They weren't getting paid to go to class and learn, so why should they?

  Mr. K's response to their answers was uncomplicated and unusual. They *would* be paid for going to class that year. Every Choice student who had a perfect attendance record would be paid $50 per term. Each absence would cost $10; five absences meant no reward.

The Kansas City, Kansas "Small Group" Model

The Westport "whole school" model was evolving satisfactorily. It was, however, proving to be more expensive than the Planning Team had expected. The early financial projections had been based on limited personnel costs and clearly defined post-secondary education costs—tuition, books, academic fees and room and board. Each program modification increased the cost. The danger was that Project Choice would price itself out of the market: the cost would be a deterrent to replication.

Tom Rhone proposed an alternative model. He suggested that Project Choice work with small, randomly selected groups of students within a school. Thus the Kansas City, Kansas "small group" model was launched—*designed specifically to test an alternative approach to the costly "whole school" Westport model.*

For four years, beginning in September 1989, 30 students at each of the five Kansas City, Kansas District 500 high schools—Harmon, Schlagle, Sumner Academy, Washington and Wyandotte—were randomly selected by computer, using selection criteria that would result in a student mix representative of the economic, racial and ethnic composition of the entire school district. Four of the schools were open admission public high schools; Sumner Academy was a public school with a rigorous academic program.

The "small group" model would test whether, or the degree to which, students could be motivated and whether, or the degree to which, school site culture could be influenced or changed when fewer students were involved in a program. Like their counterparts at Westport High, the Choice students in the Kansas schools attended daily in-school "Enrichment Classes" that included tutoring, field trips, and counseling. Again, each Project Choice Teacher was appointed by the school's principal. A Coordinator, jointly funded by the Kauffman Foundation and the Kansas School District, was added to the central school district office staff to coordinate Project Choice among the five Kansas schools and UMKC tutors were assigned to Choice students in Kansas.

Project Choice now had two models and 575 student participants. (Over the course of the demonstration, a total of 800 youngsters were served by the Westport "whole school" model, 600 by the Kansas "small group" model.)

A Bonus: The Investment Club

In December 1989, the first attendance checks were distributed. Tom Rhone used the occasion to urge the students to spend some of their reward, but save or invest the rest. Students and their parents were intrigued by the idea of investing, but none knew how to go about it. Mr. K devised a solution. Working through Marion Merrell Dow and Paine Webber, the Project Choice Investment Club—

to all Choice students, parents and teachers—was established. Club members met regularly to discuss and make investment decisions. (When the last Westport class graduated and the few remaining students in Kansas expressed little interest, the Club was closed out. Participants had doubled their money and more than doubled their knowledge about investing.)

Second-Year Findings and Results

May 1989—Good News

Perhaps the most exciting and significant single discovery in 1989 was the result of the first random drug tests at Westport High and the five Kansas schools: 98 percent of Project Choice students tested drug free!

June 1990—More Good News

The increased support that the Project Choice Teachers, the students, and the families received during school year 1989-90 had made a difference—

- Course failures were down
- Parent involvement had increased by 80 percent

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The Third Year's Model

The Third Year's model included the following elements developed in Years One and Two:

√ The Choice Agreement
√ Choice Enrichment Classes
√ Parents' Meetings
√ The School, College and University Partnerships (SCUP)
√ The Choice Advisory Board
√ *Report Card*
√ A Monetary Incentive
√ An Investment Club

Program Year Three- September 1990-June 1991

In the Third Year, the functions of the Home School Coordinator and the Project Coordinator were reorganized into—

The School Family Services Unit—to increase school visits and personal monitoring of students, to increase family activities and training sessions, and to organize celebratory events

A Project Choice Manager post was created—to coordinate all the program elements and to address staff development issues in the Kansas and Missouri schools

A School Social Worker position in Kansas City, Kansas—to assist the School Family Services Team by working with students whose social, economic, and family problems were interfering with their academic performances

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1990-91: PROGRAM YEAR THREE

- **SCHOOL-FAMILY SERVICES COMPONENT**
- **STAFF DEVELOPMENT FOR ALL TEACHERS AT ALL CHOICE SCHOOLS**

In September 1990, 126 students joined the program at Westport and another 150 enrolled in Kansas, bringing the total number of participants to 708 in ninth, tenth and eleventh grades in six high schools. Just as the numbers of students and parents had increased, so had the numbers of teachers, administrators, and counselors. Once again, the program had to be modified.

Family Services Component

The School-Family Services Component responded to the need for more activities that would bring together the Choice students, families and teachers. Choice staff and teachers agreed that increased involvement would benefit all participants. The task was more than the Home School Coordinator and Project Coordinator could handle. The effort had to be formalized; more staff was needed to organize and manage student/family activities and support services.

The addition of School-Family Services staff meant that—

- Schools would be visited more often
- More time would be spent monitoring and interacting with students
- More training opportunities and social activities could be offered for families, including—
  - A gala dinner with Mr. K at Bartle Hall Convention Center for 800 Westport Project Choice students, families, teachers, project and school staff and other supporters
  - A gala dinner with Mr. K at the Jack Reardon Civic Center for more than 900 Project Choice participants and supporters from the Kansas high schools. (It was on this occasion that Mr. K delivered the inspirational "Do Your Best" speech.)

Staff Development for All Teachers at All Choice Schools

By the third program year Project Choice staff had recognized that it would take more than a narrow focus on Choice students and teachers to improve the overall quality of education in the participating schools. It was clear that it was time to expand.

A Project Choice Manager was hired to address staff development issues in the participating Kansas and Missouri schools. The new Manager had an extensive background in school improvement and reform and had herself been a principal. Her first priority was to assure high quality education for the Choice students. Her second was to build the capacity of the participating schools by promoting improvements and reforms that would remain after the Choice demonstration had ended. The overall goal of the component was to improve instruction for all students in the two school districts by initiating an ongoing discussion among educators about teaching and learning. Central to this model was the belief that the process of learning was as important as the content.

Staff development strategies focused on:

- Encouraging teachers to use cooperative learning
- Encouraging teachers to use a Socratic seminar approach
- Encouraging peer coaching
- Encouraging teachers to reflect on their learning and share with their peers
- Introducing teachers and educators to relevant educational issues

Over the course of a typical year, staff development was scheduled to include:

- Six monthly professional development sessions at The Learning Exchange (The Learning Exchange is a non-profit education organization founded in 1972 to provide professional development programs and instructional services to school districts throughout metropolitan Kansas City.)
- A four-day session on Socratic Seminars
- Monthly Alliance Change Team (ACT)/Choice team meetings at participating schools (The ACT/Choice meetings were directed by The Learning Exchange staff.)
- Follow-up visits by Learning Exchange fellows to each school
- Optional, but highly recommended, participation in a Learning Exchange conference

Third-Year Findings and Results

Everybody was learning. The Project Choice students were staying in school, they were making progress against their own baselines, and Foundation and Choice staffs were making their own discoveries. Over the course of the the third year the following findings and insights came to light:

- At the end of the 1990-91 school year, attrition rates were significantly lower for Project Choice students than for comparison groups. The attrition rate among students in comparison groups was almost twice as great as Project Choice students.
- Mandatory participation in the Basic Skills/Enrichment Classes was keeping the upper graders from taking courses that were essential for completion of their majors or was keeping them from enjoying electives. As a consequence, eleventh and twelth graders were excused from the Enrichment Program.
- Choice participants continued to test overwhelmingly drug free—95 percent in the Kansas schools and 98 percent at Westport.
- Although Choice participation did not result in a general, dramatic improvement in the participants' grade point averages overall, significant numbers of those who had been viewed as potential dropouts did continue to stay in school.
- On the negative side, absentee rates continued to increase after students' first year of participation.
- Some school staff did not support Project Choice principles or practices. Some teachers opposed both the inclusive"whole school"model and the random selection "small group" model. They felt that participation in Choice should be based on rigorous academic criteria because it was wasteful to expend the resources on children who were learning-disabled or not highly motivated. Some believed that Choice was keeping students who were hindering the achievement of their peers.
- In addition, some Project Choice teachers who had been designated by their principals felt that they had been "drafted" to serve in a program they did not fully support. Teacher discomfort was complicated by a high rate of principal turnover during the program's first four years—five principals at Westport, three principals in the Kansas schools.
- The vast majority of the Choice students did not know how to plan for post-secondary education, had little conception of their career options or what it would take to achieve in any given field. Furthermore, many continued to struggle academically—they needed to make up courses in order to graduate on time and they needed to pass courses that would qualify them for college and vocational training. In most cases, the high schools were not prepared to meet these needs.

"Kids can sense when a teacher doesn't care or ha low expectations them.

Project Choice Student

# # #

The Fourth Year's Model

The Fourth Year's model included the following elements developed in Years One, Two and Three:

√ The Choice Agreement
√ Choice Enrichment Classes
√ Parents' Meetings
√ The School, College and University Partnerships (SCUP)
√ The Choice Advisory Board
√ *Report Card*
√ A Monetary Incentive
√ An Investment Club
√ The School Family Services Unit
√ A Project Choice Manager
√ A Kansas City, Kansas Social Worker to strengthen The School Family Services Unit

Program Year Four- July 1991-August 1992

Five additional elements were added to both models to help students and their families make the transition from high school to post-secondary education—

√ ACT Workshops (conducted by the Stanley Kaplan Education Services)—to prepare junior and senior high school students for the ACT test
√ The Summer Bridge Program—to provide a residential college summer experience for incoming seniors
√ The Out-of-State Decision Committee—to review requests for enrollment in institutions outside of Kansas and Missouri
√ Project Match with Boys and Girls Club—to assist those students entering the workforce directly after high school
√ A Post-secondary Specialist—to design and implement a smooth transition process as students moved from high school to post-secondary institutions

1991–1996: Program Years Four to Eight

- **MEETING NEW NEEDS**
- **MAKING FURTHER ADJUSTMENTS**

The first cohort of "Kauffman Kids," the youngsters who entered the ninth grade in 1988, would be high school seniors in school year 1991-92. Soon, staff realized, they would be working with students in high school and beyond—colleges and universities, vocational and technical schools. New needs demanded expanded services.

The changes that were made between 1991 and 1996 fall into two categories:

- Those designed to prepare the students for the post-secondary experience and improve their chances of entering colleges or training and
- Those designed to support students in post-secondary schools

PREPARING STUDENTS FOR COLLEGE

The Post Secondary Component

In July of 1991 the Post-Secondary Component was put in place. Its purpose was to facilitate the process and transition as Project Choice students went from high school to post secondary institutions. A Post-secondary Specialist was hired to design and implement the process. Students needed guidance to understand the specifics of the process, such as criteria for choosing and applying to schools, establishing a timetable for taking tests, and submitting applications. Services included—

- Working with high school counselors to help determine students' needs and wishes for education and training after graduation
- Working in the schools with Project Choice students, individually and in groups, to help them through the process of choosing, applying to and entering post secondary institutions
- Providing ACT prep workshops for seniors and juniors
- Providing financial aid workshops for parents and students
- Organizing trips to college fairs and college campuses

The first Project Choice students who went on to post-secondary schools were members of Westport High School's Class of 1992. When the post secondary component was initiated, 136 of the original 200 who had enrolled in Project Choice were entering seniors. Few had taken the ACT. Project Choice staff worked diligently to guide them through the application process. Of the 113 students who graduated in June, 91 went on to 20 different post secondary institutions. Sixty-nine enrolled in four-year colleges or universities, 19 entered two-year community colleges, and three entered vocational institutes or business schools.

The Summer Bridge Program

By spring of 1991, the first cohort of "Kauffman Kids" was finishing 11th grade and beginning to see college as a real possibility. Most would be the first in their families to go to college. They were filled with hope and trepidation, excited but worried about life away from home. Project Choice staff realized that the students needed and deserved real-life preparation for campus life. Summer programs were part of the answer. A residential summer college experience would introduce students to colleges they might want to attend, allow them to experience college life and its requirements, and increase their awareness of career opportunities.

Proposals for summer programs were solicited from colleges and universities in Missouri and Kansas. The programs were required to incorporate concepts of youth development, such as goals clarification and career exploration, in addition to academic work. Over the next four summers, four universities and one community college were selected as summer sites. All four universities offered courses for incoming seniors; one also offered a program for incoming juniors. The community college offered summer courses for college credit.

Summer 1991

The first Summer Bridge programs were offered by Central Missouri State University (CMSU) and Kansas State University (KSU). The CMSU program enrolled 34 incoming seniors in a two-week session and 16 in a five-week session. Based on a "cognitive development" model with core classes in writing, study skills and career planning, the program was designed for students who were doing well in high school and had already made the decision to attend college. University administrators welcomed it as an opportunity to encourage students to submit applications. Kansas State University enrolled 26 incoming juniors from the first cohort of Kansas students.

Summer 1992

Both Kansas State University and Central Missouri State University offered four-week courses for incoming seniors. Twenty two Westport students attended the CMSU program and 18 Kansas students enrolled at KSU. Central

Methodist College in Missouri enrolled 31 students in a two week program.

In addition, 25 incoming juniors attended a two-week program at Baker University in Kansas. Focused on computer instruction and the enhancement of study skills, its goal was to provide the younger students with information and experiences that would increase their skills so they could make well-informed choices and succeed in future pursuits. It was designed to be non-threatening and varied and to provide many opportunities for students to experience academic and social success. There was no expectation that incoming juniors would be ready to make decisions about post secondary choices.

Summer 1993

The program continued to expand. In addition to 31 incoming seniors enrolled at Kansas State University and 20 incoming juniors attending Baker University, Central Methodist College in Missouri again offered a two-week course which was attended by 19 incoming seniors.

Penn Valley Community College, located in Kansas City, Missouri, offered a four-week non-residential college preparation program. Between 1993 and 1995, 65 incoming seniors took summer courses for college credit.

Summers 1994 and 1995

Twenty three students enrolled in the Kansas State University summer program in 1994. In 1995, individual placements were arranged for those incoming seniors from the last Kansas cohort who were interested in a residential summer campus program.

Project Match

Project Choice was doing its best to support the first 91 graduates who had gone on to college, vocational or business school, but it did not abandon those who had chosen a different path. In 1992, a new component, Project Match, was created in collaboration with the Boys and Girls Club of Kansas City, Missouri for the other 22 graduates. Project Match offered job training and other employment services.

Saturday School

Saturday School was started in school year 1992-93 to give students who were in danger of not graduating with their class a chance to make up failed courses. It also offered advanced courses for students who were excelling academically. High school counselors selected participants; the courses were taught by master teachers designated by the school district. The Saturday School model provided one-to-one instruction and independent learning. Teachers and students signed individual contracts, listing elements such as the work required, a schedule for completing the work in 18 weeks, and the method of determining grades.

Project Choice provided bus or carfare for participants who otherwise would have had no means of transportation to and from Westport High School. Kansas students received course credit in their schools through a special agreement between the respective school districts.

In its first two years, Saturday School held two sessions and classes included electives and enrichment courses. In its third year (1994-95), only one session was held and only required subjects were offered: English, algebra, physics, American and world history, biology/ecology/anatomy, and physical science. English as a Second Language was also offered for Project Choice students and parents who were not native speakers of English.

Tech-Prep Academy

Also targeted toward juniors, Tech Prep was a six-week summer program focused entirely upon career exploration. It was designed to make high school students aware of different careers and helped them match their interests to career goals. Students visited job sites, observed working conditions, researched requirements for specific occupations and careers, participated in internships and mentoring activities, and learned skills that could be used to develop career portfolios.

Big Brothers/Big Sisters Mentoring

In August 1993 Big Brothers/Big Sisters matched adult volunteers with 25 Project Choice high school students. The goal of the collaborative effort was to give students extra opportunities to have positive, sustained relationships with supportive and knowledgeable adults as they planned their futures.

The Fifth Year's Model

The Fifth Year's model included the following elements developed during the four previous years:

- √ The Choice Agreement
- √ Choice Enrichment Classes
- √ Parents' Meetings
- √ The School, College and University Partnerships (SCUP)
- √ The Choice Advisory Board
- √ *Report Card*
- √ A Monetary Incentive
- √ An Investment Club
- √ The School Family Services Unit
- √ A Project Choice Manager
- √ The Summer Bridge Program
- √ A Kansas City, Kansas Social Worker
- √ ACT Workshops
- √ The Out-of-State Decision Committee
- √ Staff Development Pilot began—to serve school-based staff
- √ A Post-secondary Specialist

Program Year Five- July 1992-August 1993

A number of program elements were added to respond to the needs of the Choice students who were approaching graduation—

- √ Saturday School taught by master teachers—to help students earn credits to meet graduation requirements
- √ Longview Community College—to provide classes to improve Choice students' reading skills
- √ Choice Student Council organized—to provide Kansas and Missouri students with formal way to interact with Choice staff
- √ Strengthened Parental Outreach—through recreational activities, translation in Spanish and Vietnamese, and school appreciation dinners
- √ A strong post-secondary component was added that included—
  - Tech Prep Academy—to deal with career awareness
  - Big Brother/Big Sister Mentoring for 25 high school students
  - College/Vocational campus visits
  - Financial Aid Workshops
  - Accompanying students and parents to schools for orientation and enrollment.
  - College credit courses offered Choice students at community colleges
  - Staff visits to Choice college students in the fall

HELPING STUDENTS IN COLLEGE

In 1987, Mr. K and the Project Choice Planning Team were not focusing on the needs of those Project Choice students who would be enrolling in post-secondary schools in the fall of 1991. To the degree that they thought about it at all, they expected that most of the high school graduates would be well on the road to self-sufficiency, but experience revealed otherwise. The transition from home and a familiar neighborhood to a world of ethnic, racial and economic diversity threatened to undermine the performance of many Choice students. Project staff realized that they had to maintain relationships with their "Kauffman Kids" to provide necessary encouragement, counseling, and support. Consequently, beginning in 1992, the program was expanded in several directions:

- A 1-800 number was set up so that students could call the Kauffman Foundation for advice, information, encouragement or the comfort of a familiar voice.
- Staff visited all students enrolled in Missouri and Kansas schools at least once each year.
- Post-secondary preparation was redesigned to prepare students for diversity and difference and how to cope with prejudice and discrimination.
- Post-secondary preparation was redesigned to emphasize time management and the importance of balancing study and extracurricular activity. (One student became a campus leader but failed his courses.)
- Increased attention was given to the "match" between students and prospective colleges, as it became evident that most students were doing best at those schools that offered strong support services and individualized attention.

The danger of generalizing cannot be overemphasized in this regard. It is not the kind of school—e.g., small versus large, rural versus urban, historically black versus mainstream, church-affiliated versus secular—but the strong support services and individualized attention that are most important for most students. Some young women were most comfortable at small colleges and many African American students were thriving at historically black institutions, but they were also thriving and performing well at large state universities that had worked with Project Choice to develop welcoming and supportive networks. (Kansas State University is cited as the outstanding model in this regard.)

By June 1996, at the end of the eighth program year, the demonstration was winding down. The last cohort of Kansas students had graduated from high school and the first Westport participants were graduating from four-year institutions. Although 320 students were still in the post-secondary phase of the program, staff believed that sufficient data, evaluation and practical experience were available to look back and make judgements on what Project Choice "found" and what Project Choice "learned."

> Two girls in college told me that I had a positive influence on their lives. They remember my walking into the school with a suit and briefcase and, to them, I was the role model. They wanted to be like that.
>
> **Adriana Pecina**
> Post-secondary Team Project Choice

The Sixth Year's Model

The program operated with the following elements:

√ The Choice Agreement
√ Choice Enrichment Classes
√ Parents' Meetings
√ The School, College and University Partnerships (SCUP)
√ The Choice Advisory Board
√ *Report Card*
√ A Monetary Incéntive
√ An Investment Club
√ The School Family Services Unit
√ A Project Choice Manager
√ The Summer Bridge Program
√ A Kansas City, Kansas Social Worker
√ ACT Workshops
√ The Out-of-State Decision Committee
√ Staff Development
√ The Saturday School
√ Longview Community College
√ Choice Student Council
√ Strengthened Parental Outreach
√ A strong post-secondary component that included—

- Tech Prep Academy
- Big Brother/Big Sister Mentoring
- Project Match with Boys and Girls Club
- College/vocational campus visits
- Financial aid workshops
- Accompanying students and parents to schools
- Project Match with Boys and Girls Club
- College credit courses at community colleges
- Visits to Choice college students

Program Year Six- September 1993-June 1994

One new program element was added—

√ Resumé Writing Workshops—for college juniors and seniors

The Seventh Year's Model

The program elements included:

√ The Choice Agreement
√ Choice Enrichment Classes
√ Parents' Meetings
√ The School, College and University Partnerships (SCUP)
√ The Choice Advisory Board
√ *Report Card*
√ A Monetary Incentive
√ The School Family Services Unit
√ A Project Choice Manager
√ The Summer Bridge Program
√ A Kansas City, Kansas Social Worker
√ ACT Workshops
√ The Out-of-State Decision Committee
√ Staff Development
√ Longview Community College
√ Strengthened Parental Outreach
√ Visits to Choice college students
√ Big Brother/Big Sister Mentoring
√ Resumé Writing Workshops
√ A strong post-secondary component that included—

- Tech Prep Academy
- Financial aid workshops
- Project Match
- College/vocational campus visits
- Accompanying students and parents to schools

The Investment Club was closed out.
The Saturday School was eliminated.

Program Year Seven- September 1994-June 1995

Two new program elements were added—

√ Career Shadowing for Kansas Seniors arranged by Chamber of Commerce
√ A meeting between Choice college graduates and prospective employers arranged by Missouri and Kansas Chambers of Commerce

Project Choice The FINDINGS

Findings Related To Concept and Planning

Catalyzed by Mr. K's eagerness to move ahead with Project Choice, the Foundation did not give itself enough planning time to consult with community leaders and potential stakeholders, work with the stakeholders to study the literature, read evaluations, visit and analyze similar programs, and talk with experts on the inner-city, dropout prevention, and modern youth culture. As a consequence—

- The community leadership did not have a clear understanding of Project Choice and potential stakeholders did not feel a sense of responsibility to it. Even the schools felt that Choice was not "their" program.
- There were widespread differences of perception regarding the purpose, goals and expectations of the program. A comprehensive and systematic communications plan should have been an integral part of both the planning and program phases of the program. For example, although Project Choice was conceived, designed and promoted as a high school dropout prevention program, the local media and general public characterized it as a college education program from the outset.
- There were public perceptions of withdrawal or even failure when the program began to wind down, because it had not been made clear at the outset that demonstration programs have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- The Foundation did not fully comprehend and prepare for the variety and complexity of the academic, developmental, social and economic needs of the students and their families. As the program was expanded and refined in response to those needs, costs increased dramatically and unexpectedly. Had those needs been anticipated during a planning period, the costs might have been shared through partnerships with cooperating community agencies and service providers.
- Issues that would arise at the back end of the program, such as college preparation and support after college enrollment, were not fully explored. To some extent, they came as a surprise and further added unanticipated dollars to the budget.

Findings Related to Students

- Because of the truncated planning period, many of the Project Choice lessons were learned from the experiences of the first cohort of Westport High School students, particularly when they enrolled in college. Many felt unprepared for the stresses of college life and, as a result, the drop out rate was extremely high at the end of the first semester.
- On the other hand, Project Choice had a positive effect on its students whether they remained in the program or dropped out. More than half the respondents who were no longer involved in the program in 1994 reported that Choice had affected their self-confidence, academic skills and social skills.
- Many students who dropped out of Choice at both the high school and college levels are now enrolled in community colleges and paying for classes on their own.

> A simple incentive to stay in school, however big, will not assure the success of children and youth who have many obstacles that must be overcome before they can be educated. Each young person in Project Choice had a unique set of issues to deal with. Trying to help them was like aiming at a moving target. Good outcomes were achieved only after we became a 'surrogate family' of caring adults trying to help each child weave the web of supportive resources they needed.
>
> **Bob Rogers**
> The Ewing M Kauffman Foundation

Preparing Students for College

- Students need help understanding the requirements of their chosen professions and occupations. Therefore, community leaders must participate by serving as role models and mentors and providing internships, job-shadowing assignments, part-time jobs, and community service opportunities when one of the overall aims of a program is to break the isolation of the inner-city and give youths the tools to be successful in the mainstream society.
- School-based counselors often do not provide sufficient information and guidance about the selection and application process and parents who have not attended college cannot be expected to guide their children through the intricacies of selecting and applying to college. Therefore, introductory visits and residential campus experiences are especially beneficial for these young people.
- Students need to be prepared for the transition from a homogenous high school to a racially, ethnically and economically diverse college environment. Many of the first Choice graduates felt totally unprepared to cope with the discrimination and prejudice they encountered.
- Parents and students need clarification of what is being promised, particularly in terms of post-secondary education: will the program pay for graduate school? for trips home? for personal computers?
- College students make good speakers and role models for college-bound students, covering such topics as time mangement, roommates, size and formality of a particular school, relationships with other students, racial issues and study techniques. This also allows students an opportunity to "give back" and mentor their younger peers.

Supporting Students in College

- Post-secondary school choices must be matched to the needs of individual students. The best retention and graduation rates have been at institutions that provide strong support systems and individualized attention; they range from large institutions like Kansas State University to small, historically black colleges and universities. It is not the size of the school, but its support network and its commitment to the students that makes the difference.
- Community colleges can be a good match academically for those students who are not ready for a four year university. However, they may also present serious non-academic challenges and distractions, including pressure to "hang out" with old peer groups, day-to-day family demands, and neighborhood issue
- Support at the post-secondary level needs to go beyond the freshman year.
- Support should not be limited to academic issues.
- The profile of Choice's college graduates is similar across gender, racial, and ethnic lines: they all show strong family support, established goals, internship experience, focused career directions, and high self-motivation.

"Seven years ago we were bright-eyed and bushy tailed about these kids going away to college, where today we'll tell you about kids choosing career paths and about what they want to be doing. We're not worried about 'Are you going to college?' We're worried about 'Have we gotten you prepared so that you can do what you want?'

Larry Englebrick
Principal, Harmon High School, Kansas City, Kansas

"Every problem that is out there in the world our kids have dealt with in the home. Immediate survival issues and the parents' money worries — translated into 'I need you working now'— sometimes overwhelm the long-term advantages of being a college graduate."

Leon Franklin
Post-secondary T... Project Choice

Findings Related to Parents

- Parent participation cannot be left to chance; it requires planning and must address those topics that parents want to know about, not just what experts think parents should know about.
- Parent attendance increases when meetings are held at neutral sites, when child care is available, when food is provided, and the topics are of interest to parents.
- Job, family, health and other problems often make it difficult for parents to meet program requirements; they do love and care about their children but they are coping with survival issues and attending a meeting may not be a priority.

Findings Related to Schools

- The Planning Team made some mistaken assumptions about student preparedness. The schools' curricula should have been reviewed beforehand.
- Approval at the central school district level is not enough. School "buy-in" and understanding of project goals, expectations and strategies is absolutely essential. Implementation should be considered only where all parties involved—superintendents, principals, teachers and counselors are committed to the program. (Some Project Choice Teachers were designated by principals on the basis of availability, rather than interest, commitment or teaching abilities.) Furthermore, there must be some assurance and commitment that, barring the unforeseen and the uncontrollable, the program will not suffer from high staff turnover rates.
- Teacher selection is critical if a goal is to change the instructional climate in the classrooms.
- Teachers need encouragement and support from the principal and other policy-makers if a goal is to change the school's culture beyond the life of the demonstration.
- Teachers and principals must be involved from the outset if a goal is to improve the overall quality of classroom instruction and build school capacity. A teacher development component should not be an add-on several years into the program.

Findings Related to Project Staff

- The background of the staff is crucial; they need to "know their way around" in order to steer young people to the right resources. This knowledge is absolutely critical if the school does not have integrated services on site.
- Staff time will be skewed toward students. Over 50 percent of Project Choice staff time was devoted to students, 10 percent to parents, 20 percent to teachers, and less than 20 percent with other school district personnel.
- Changing school cultures requires that staff make the time to build relationships with all school personnel—teachers, counselors, principals, janitors, security guards, administrative and other support staff.
- Staff orientation should include diversity training.

Findings on Student "Choices"

In June 1996, 47 students from the first Project Choice cohort—Westport High School's Class of 1992—earned their college degrees. Some of their classmates had graduated two years earlier from community colleges and vocational training courses. Still other Choice high school graduates moved directly into the workforce. There is no question but that Project Choice helped all these young people make successful transitions into productive adulthood.

> "Everyone was polite and cooperative on the surface, because of the Foundation, I realized later we were just being tolerated."
>
> Project Choice Staff Member

> "Teachers had so many changes to deal with, they learned to affect the 'appearance' of implementation.'
>
> Project Choice Staff Member

It is true that not all the 200 students who enrolled in Project Choice in 1988 stayed with the program, but it should be understood that not all dropped out in the customary sense of that word. Some students left the school district or left Kansas City entirely. One of the realities of poverty is that families tend to move frequently—they are burned out, they can't afford the rent, they lose jobs and have to go where the next opportunity presents itself and so forth. Some students left the program but did not drop out of school. Others, of course, were dropped from the program for not meeting the requirements and most of those did not graduate.

The examples of student "choices" listed below paint a broad-brush picture of the probable mix of outcomes that can be anticipated.

Diverse Student Outcomes

A TAD Technical Institute graduate earning $32,000 annually in the auto industry

A bright student lured by the pull of the street, selling drugs

A Duke University freshman with a 4.00 grade point average

A homeless student who graduated high school with an excellent attendance record

A student expelled for carrying a gun

A student in jail for murder

A student in a pre-med program

A Notre Dame honors student who is also the starting defensive linebacker

A student who dropped out of Choice when in college has returned to community college on his own

A student preparing for the Olympics after winning the National Golden Gloves Championship and the U.S. Nationals

A Penn Valley Community College student who graduated high school with honors after the birth of her daughter

A student earning a 4.0 grade point average at Johnson and Wales University who plans a career as an international marketing analyst

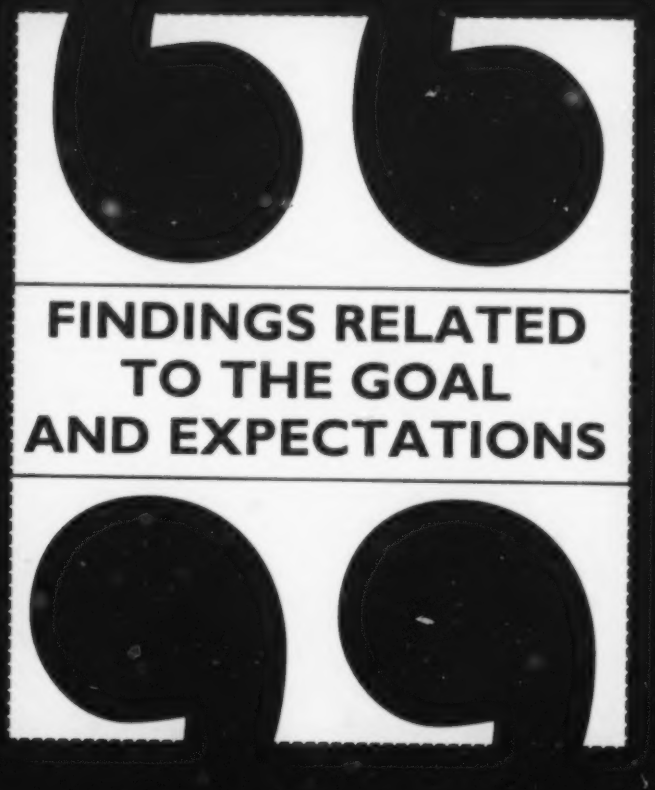
A Fisk University student with a 4.00 grade point average

The next section summarizes the overall findings as they relate to the goal and expectations of Project Choice.

What's successful is subjective. For many of our kids, it's just to have walked across that stage against all odds, and they beat the odds. Every year I have met those kids at commencement as they come down the steps, I've hugged each and every one of them and cried like a baby. Not because I am sad to see them go away from school, but because I knew in my heart of hearts they were walking that very thin line. And I was just pulling for them and ecstatic to see them make it.

Alycia Rodriguez
Project C

PROJECT CHOICE



FINDINGS RELATED TO THE GOAL AND EXPECTATIONS

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Findings related to THE GOAL and The Expectations

By 1996, the Project Choice model differed substantially from the initial design. As recounted in the previous section, components and services were added to respond to the complex web of academic and social needs that were found to impede the school performance of the low-income urban high school students. Components were also added to prepare the students for college or vocational and technical training and to assure that they would succeed once they were enrolled. Throughout the duration of the program, the original goal of increasing the number of low-income, inner-city students who graduate from high school on time and become productive members of society has not changed. However, the original eight program expectations were expanded to include the four shown below in italics.

The Goal

- To increase the number of students who stay in high school, graduate on time, and become productive members of society.

The Expectations

- Students' attendance rates would improve
- Students' grades would improve
- Choice participation would encourage superior academic performance
- Students' perceptions and attitudes toward school would improve
- Disciplinary problems, suspensions and expulsions would decrease; students' conduct would improve
- Students' social skills would improve
- The use of illegal drugs would decrease
- Pregnancy rates would decrease in the high school years
- *Parent involvement would increase*
- *Teachers' instructional skills would improve*
- *The quality of education in the school districts would improve*
- *Choice students would succeed in post secondary situations*

"I hope that everything shows that no matter whether they went to college or technical school or simply graduated from high school, that students are now in a better place than they would have been had we never existed. And that they are contributing something that gives back in a way. It makes you feel good to hear a student say, 'I want to work in Kansas City.'"

Lynn Leonard
Manager, Project Choice

How Well did Project CHOICE meet its GOAL and Expectations

The Goal

Project Choice met its goal to increase the number of students who stay in high school and graduate.

- √ Choice participation did increase the length of time students stayed in school.
- √ Choice participation did increase the number of students who stayed in school and graduated. 767 Choice students out of 1,394 who signed Project Choice Agreements did earn high school diplomas.
- √ 628 of the Choice high school graduates went on to college and 87 went to vocational, technical and business schools.

The Expectations

Many of the Project Choice expectations were met and exceeded. Others were not. The outcomes listed below in outline form were addressed in the *Lessons Learned: Executive Summary* section of this report.

Expectation One: Students' Attendance Rates Would Improve

- √ Project Choice participation did not improve student attendance. The attendance rate of the Choice students decreased from the 9th to the 12th grade, as did the attendance rate of non-Choice students.

Expectation Two: Students' Grades Would Improve

- √ The average GPA did not rise as dramatically as had been hoped because most students did not enter the program with a full grasp of basic math concepts and were reading at fourth, fifth and sixth grade levels.
- √ The students who stayed with the program—both those who were performing at grade level and those who were performing below—did make progress against their own baselines.

Expectation Three: Project Choice Would Encourage Superior Academic Performance

- √ Many of those students who were performing at grade level when they entered the program did turn in superior academic performances.
- √ The majority of the Choice students did not, because they had too much ground to make up.

Expectation Four: Students' Perceptions and Attitudes About School Would Improve

- √ Overall, Choice seniors reported that participation in the program had improved their school experience and given them a sense of the value of education. More than 75 percent felt that Project Choice had improved their academic performance and increased their likelihood of high school graduation. More than two-thirds of the seniors stated that they were likely to continue their educations.

Expectation Five: Disciplinary Problems, Suspensions and Expulsions Would Decrease; Student Conduct Would Improve

- √ Choice students had lower rates of suspension and expulsion than the comparison groups.
- √ Only two students were expelled for violent offenses.
- √ Those students who did receive short-term suspensions had committed minor infractions.

Expectation Six: Students' Social Skills Would Improve

- √ Staff and evaluators observed that the work that the Project Choice teachers and staff undertook to develop the Choice students' familiarity with codes and forms of expression and behavior that may not be common in their student to student relationships, did have a significant impact on how the students presented themselves in formal and business situations.

Expectation Seven: The Use of Illegal Drugs Would Decrease

- Over the seven years, Choice students remained 98% drug-free!

Expectation Eight: The Pregnancy Rate Would Decrease During the High School Years

- Choice participation did not decrease teen pregnancy rates below the national average.

(It is easy to counsel teenagers about the long-term impact that early child-bearing will have on their futures and the futures of their children. However, Choice staff found that beyond counseling, the issue of pregnancy is fraught with the problems. First, there is the public controversy that surrounds any program that opts to deal with sex education and/or contraception. Second, as the Project Choice Agreement was originally written, expectant mothers were dropped from the program while "expectant" fathers suffered no such penalty. The inequity was clear. Third, it was discovered that some of the girls became pregnant as the result of abuse or rape. In 1989 the prohibition against childbearing was dropped from the Agreement.)

Expectation Nine: Parent Involvement Would Increase

- Parent involvement increased dramatically after the program moved the activities out of the schools, polled the parents regarding timing and subject matter, supplied child care, and provided food.
- The overall pattern of involvement mirrored the national pattern of parental involvement at the high school level: it dropped off in the eleventh and twelth grades.

Expectation Ten: Teachers' Instructional Skills Would Improve

- Individual teachers who were interested in school reform benefited greatly from the professional training. However, their ability to use what they learned depended upon their schools' culture and openness to change. (See next expectation.)

Expectation Eleven: The Quality of Education in the School Districts Would Improve

- Schools that had administrative stability and reform-minded principals took advantage of the staff development opportunities offered and improved the level of instruction. Other schools did not show significant improvement.

Attrition and dropout rates at Westport have returned to nearly the same levels as before the program was instituted.

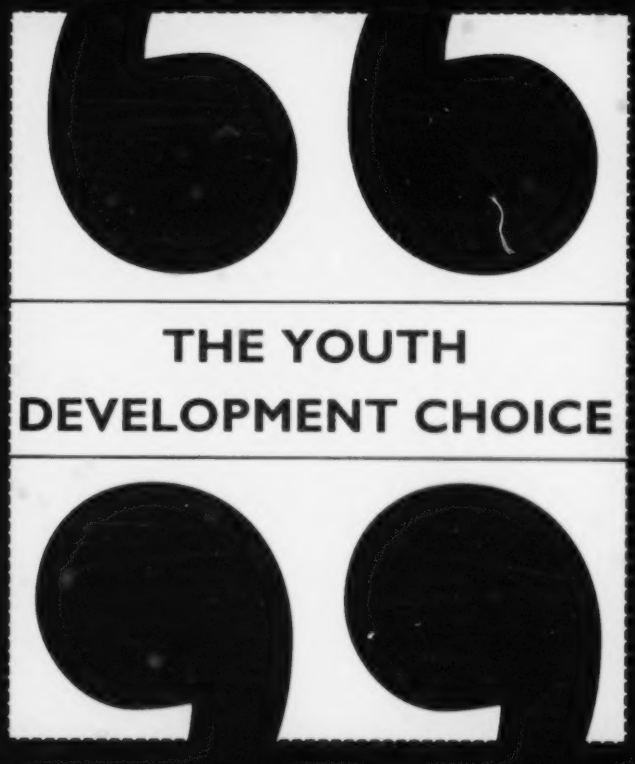
- In Kansas the result is mixed. Two schools that were reform-minded prior to the program have improved their quality of education. Little has changed in the others.

Expectation Twelve: Choice Students Would Succeed in Post-Secondary Situations

- As of January 1997, 46 percent of the students who enrolled in a post-secondary program after graduation (two-year or four-year, college, technical, or business) are either still enrolled or have completed the program.
- As of January 1997, the retention rate for Choice students who enrolled in a four-year, post-secondary program is 53 percent. (A recent ACT study indicates that 44.6 percent of students graduate from public colleges and 57.1 percent from private colleges.)
- As of January 1997, the retention rate for Choice students who enrolled in a com-

> "Project Choice changed the lives of many people and its also changed the way many people respond to life."
>
> **Lou Smith**
> The Ewing M. Kauffman Foundation

PROJECT CHOICE



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The YOUTH Development "Choice"

Mr. K's Legacy Programs made enormous contributions to the individuals they served. Moreover, as illustrated in the Lessons Learned section of this report, the operating programs provided a decade of learning opportunities for Mr. K himself and the staff he assembled to manage them. The lessons they learned are invaluable.

Although Mr. K was a generous philanthropist, he was above all a hands-on entrepreneur. Until shortly before his death, he was deeply involved in analyses of both the results and the cost-effectiveness of the Foundation's work. He was particularly troubled that the demonstrations that the Foundation was supporting were not being widely replicated, nor were they changing the way that youth-serving systems and agencies were serving youth. "Business as usual" continued to be the order of the day, despite the success and example of many aspects of the Foundation's programs. Mr. K concluded that independently creating, testing, and marketing "a better mouse trap" does not attract consumers in the public sector as it usually does in business. It became clear that public sector "mouse traps" had to be developed in partnership with the consumers who would use them and feel that they owned them. As a consequence, Mr. K and his colleagues began the process of rethinking how the Foundation could better invest its resources to promote change and consistently serve more children and youths more effectively.

The rethinking process continued after Mr. K's death and it fundamentally altered how the Youth Development Division of the Kauffman Foundation conceives its role and conducts its business. Today, Youth Development makes grants in partnership, collaboration and alliance with youth, community leaders and practitioners who are concerned about—or directly grappling with—the complex social, educational, physical and economic needs of inner-city children and their families.

The Youth Development Division has learned that attention will not be paid to the best of well-meaning efforts until communities evolve a mutual and common commitment to children from birth to entrance into the workforce.

Further, Youth Development understands that its effectiveness demands that it work jointly with others to achieve the Kauffman Foundation's vision of "self-sufficient people in healthy communities."

# # #

Project Choice Appendices

- Student **Outcomes**
- **Student** Demographics
- Graduation **Rates**
- Attendance Rates
- **Cost-Benefit** Study
- Project Choice **Evaluation Reports**
- **The Project Choice Agreements**
- The Project Choice **Staff**

What Happened to The Project Choice Students?

Of the 1,394 students who signed Project Choice Agreements –

- **767** (56%) graduated on time.
  709 of the 767 continued their educations.
- **78** (5%) failed to graduate on time.
- **107** (8%) moved out of the area.
- **34** (2%) transferred to other non-choice schools in Kansas City, Missouri and Kansas City, Kansas.
- **397** (28%) dropped out of school.
- **7** (.5%) students died.
- **4** (.3%) students' whereabouts unknown.

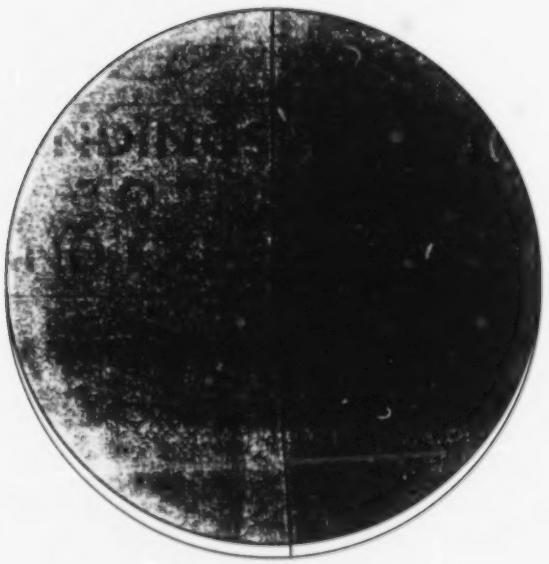
Student Demographics

GENDER MIX OF PROJECT CHOICE STUDENTS OVER THE LIFE OF THE PROGRAM

The five-year history of Project Choice shows that males and females demonstrated almost equal interest in Project Choice enrollment. Of the 1,394 students who joined the program, 51% were female and 49% were male.

GENDER MIX WITHIN ENROLLMENT

AVERAGE DURING THE FIVE YEARS OF THE PROGRAM



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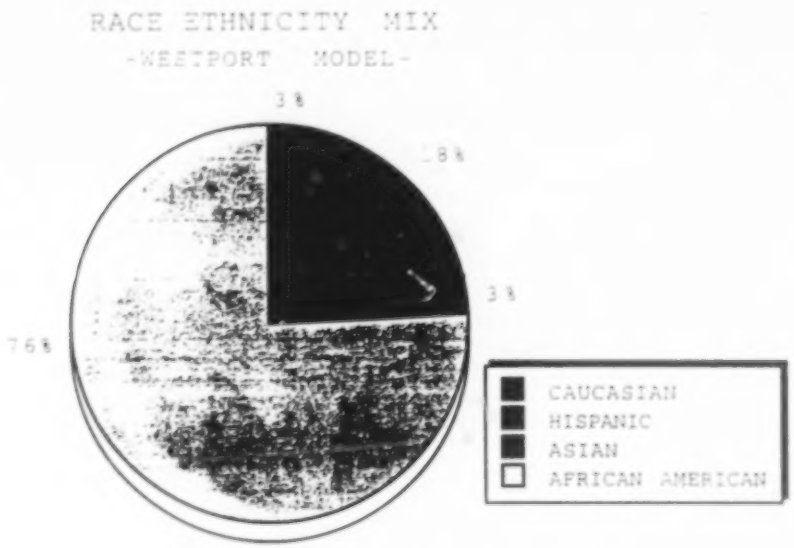
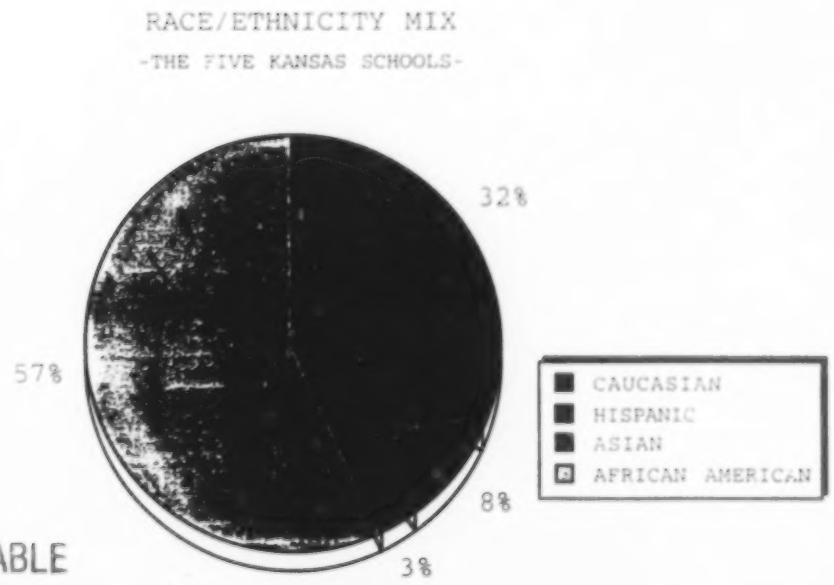
Student Demographics

RACE AND ETHNICITY

There are significant differences between the Westport High School Project Choice students in Missouri and the Project Choice students in the five Kansas Schools.

Although both groups were predominately African-American, 57% of the Kansas Choice students were African-American as compared to 76% of the Westport students. The Hispanic cohort was more than twice as large in Missouri as in Kansas. Caucasian students comprised nearly a third of the Kansas cohort but only 3% of the Westport cohort.





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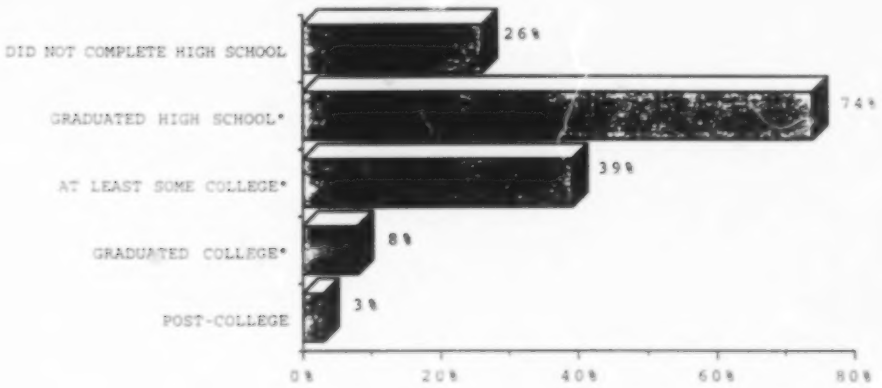
PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

Data collected during school year 1990-91 showed that three-fourths of Project Choice parents had graduated high school or received a GED. About half (102) of the group who completed high school (195) had college experience. Eight percent had graduated college and three percent had some post-college experience.

PARENTS' EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT

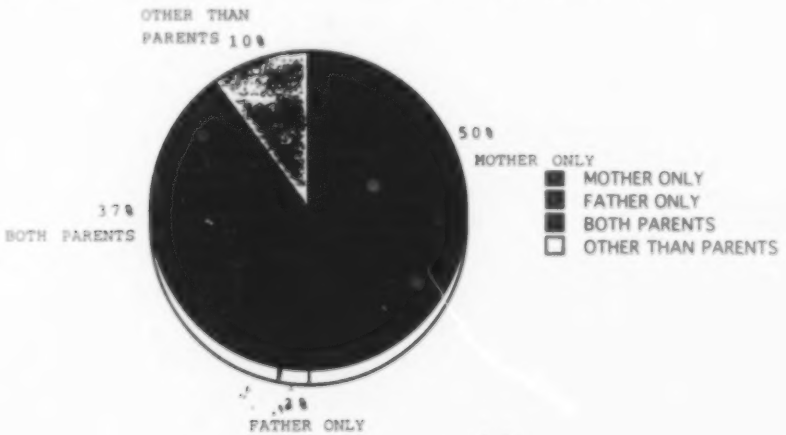


*INCLUSIVE OF THOSE CONTINUING TO NEXT LEVEL

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Only 4 in 10 Project Choice students lived in a two parent household. Half of the students lived with mothers only, 3% with fathers only, and another 10% lived with someone other than a parent.

LIVING ARRANGEMENTS OF PROJECT CHOICE STUDENTS

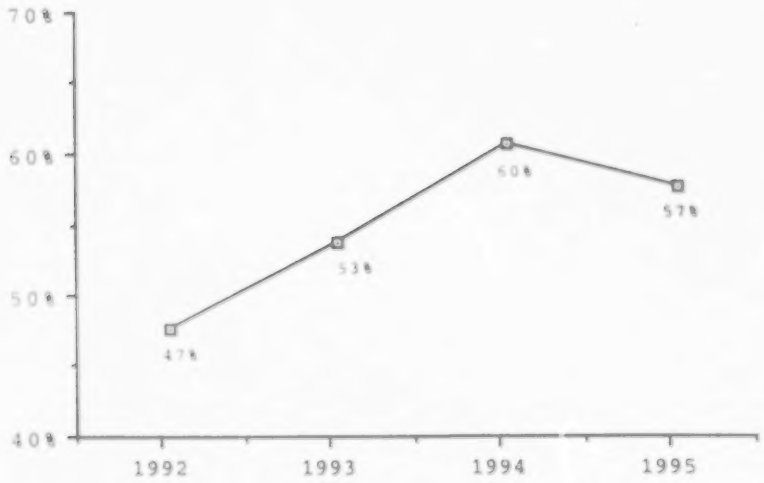


Graduation and Retention Rates

GRADUATION RATES

The first cohort of Project Choice students (Westport High School Class of 1992) had a 47% graduation rate. The graduation rates for subsequent years improved as support programs were added. However, the graduation rate "maxed out" with the 1994 graduation rate of 60%. The graduation rate of 1995 declined to 57%. Choice experience indicates that a comprehensive full-support program probably can expect graduation rates that fall in the 55-60% range.

YEAR-TO-YEAR GRADUATION RATE OF PROJECT CHOICE STUDENTS



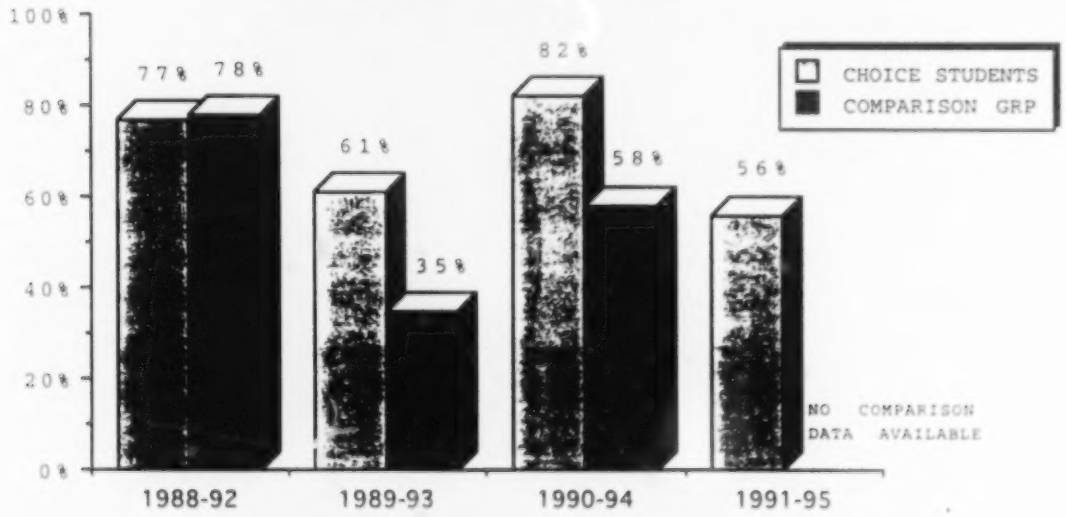
RETENTION RATES

The overall goal of Project Choice was to keep students from dropping out of high school. Therefore, retention rates were very carefully monitored.

WESTPORT

There was no statistical difference between the retention rate of Project Choice students in the first Westport High School cohort (1988-92) and a comparison group of students. Significant differences did emerge in the two subsequent Westport cohorts (1989-93 and 1990-94). The Project Choice students in the 1989-93 cohort had a retention rate of 61% versus a retention rate of 35% for the comparison group. Project Choice students in the third cohort at Westport (1990-94) had a retention rate of 82% versus the comparison group rate of 58%.
No comparison group data is available for the fourth cohort (1991-95) at Westport.

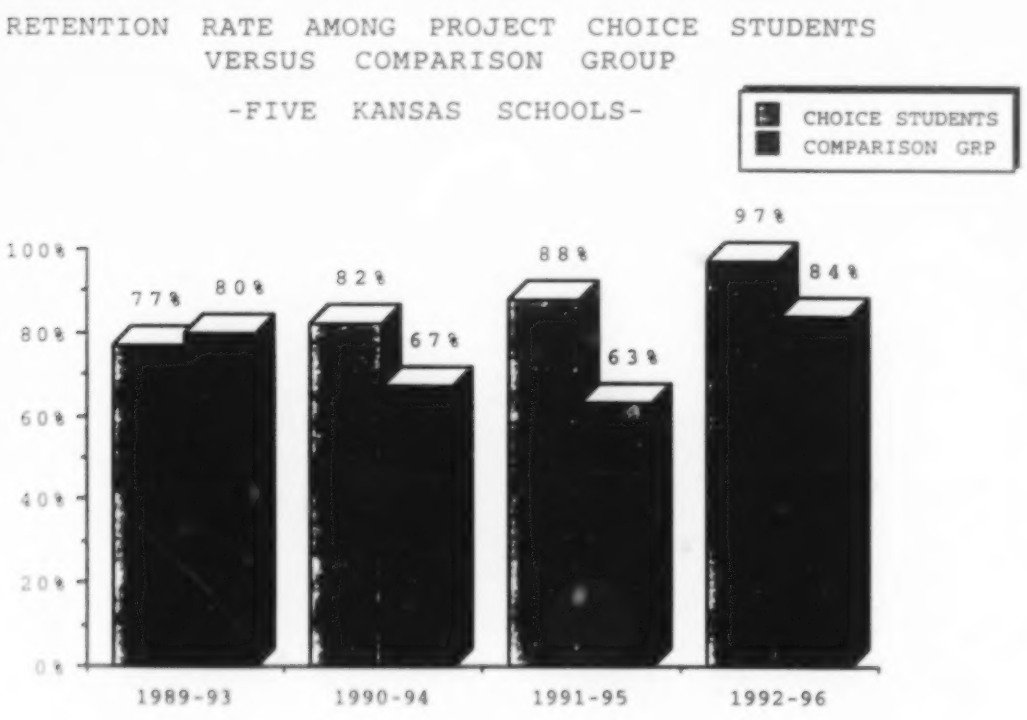
RETENTION RATE AMONG PROJECT CHOICE STUDENTS
VERSUS COMPARISON GROUP
-WESTPORT HIGH SCHOOL-



Graduation and Retention Rates

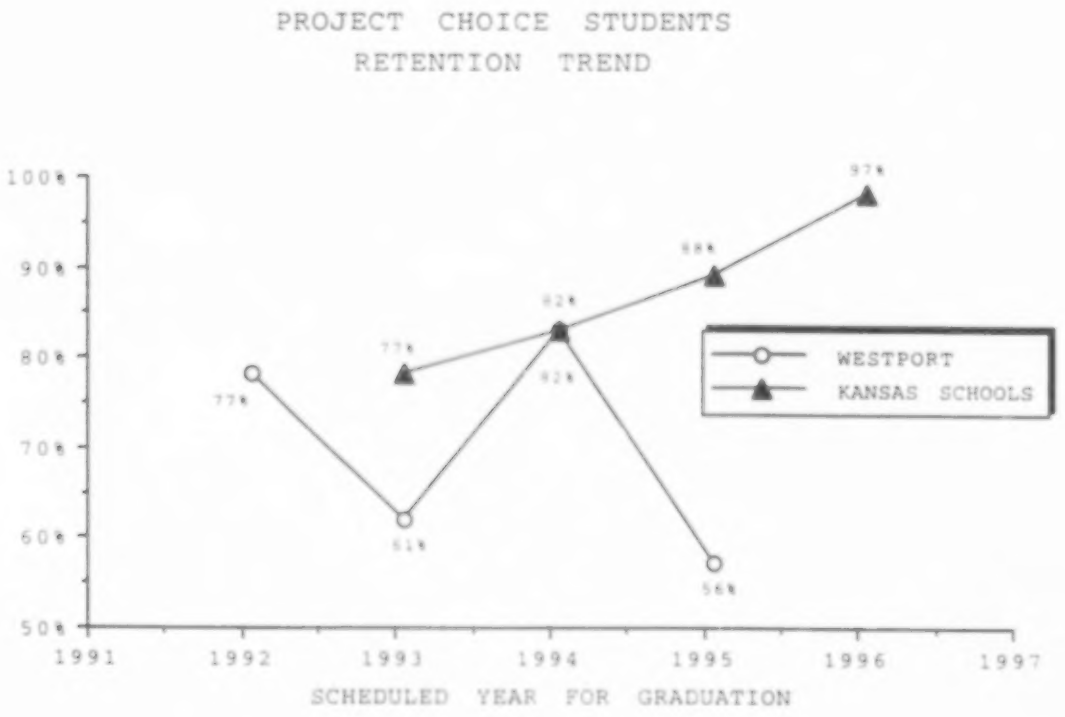
FIVE KANSAS HIGH SCHOOLS

There were no statistically significant differences between the retention rates of Project Choice students and comparison group students in the first Kansas cohort (1989-93). The three subsequent cohort comparisons show that the retention rates for Project Choice students were significantly higher than those of the comparison groups. In the second cohort (1990-94), retention of Project Choice students was 82% versus 63% for the comparison group, and in the fourth cohort (1992-96), the Project Choice retention was 97% versus 84%



RETENTION RATE TRENDS

Retention rate trends at Westport High School and at the five Kansas schools differed. Westport rates fluctuated up and down. The first cohort rate in the five Kansas schools was similar to the first Westport rate, but the Kansas rate gradually and steadily climbed to a fourth cohort retention rate of 97%. The difference between Missouri and Kansas may be attributable to greater instability in Missouri where Westport High School experienced high staff turnover and unanticipated designation as a business magnet school. In addition, the difference may have been affected by the fact that several of the Kansas schools were committed to school reform and one was an academy for gifted students. Levels of parental education and intact two-parent families may also have played a role.

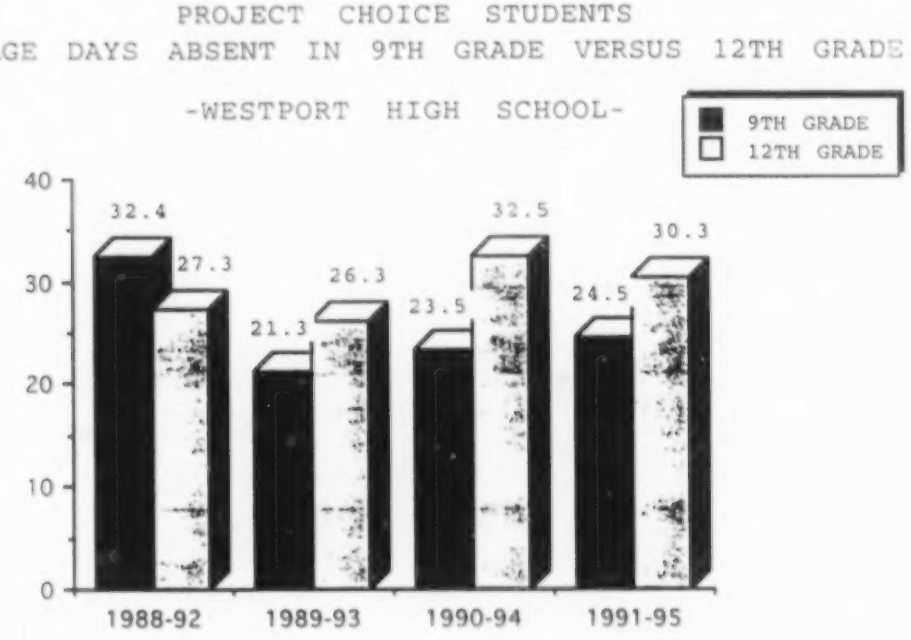


ATTENDANCE

It had been hoped that Project Choice would reduce absenteeism over four years of high school. Data collected in the two school districts indicate that it did not.

Westport

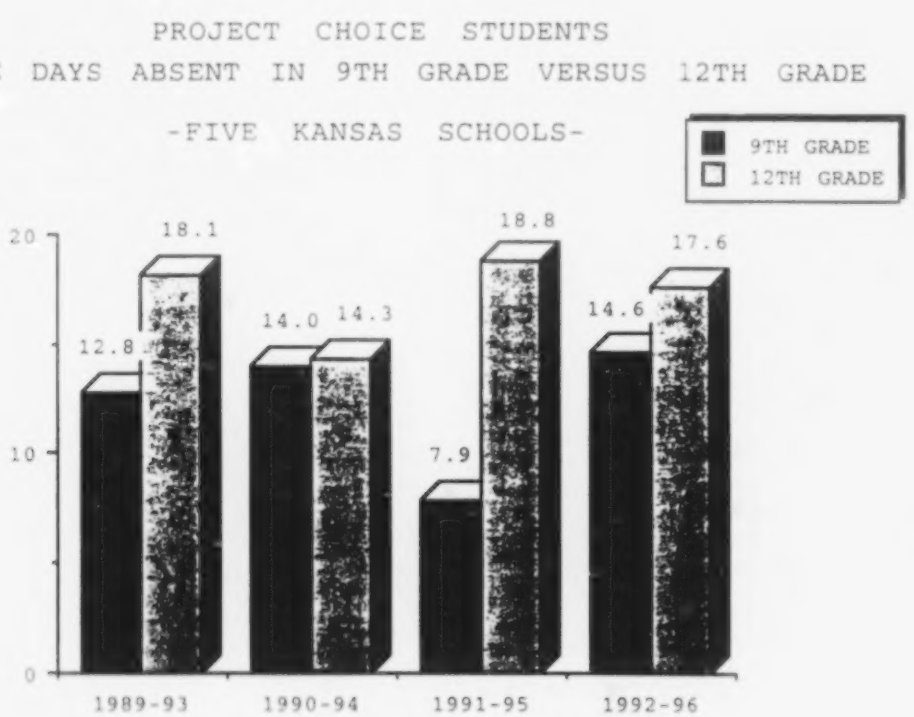
Absenteeism in the first Westport cohort did decline between the 9th and 12th grades. However, all other Westport Choice students had more absences in 12th grade than in 9th grade. In the second cohort, the rate of absence from 9th to 12th grade increased by 23%. The third cohort showed a 38% increase and the fourth cohort's 12th grade absentee rate was 24% greater that their 9th grade rate.



Attendance Rates

Five Kansas High Schools

In all four Kansas cohorts, the rate of absence increased between 9th and 12th grades, although this increase was very slight in the second cohort (1990-94) .



PROJECT CHOICE

EXPENDITURE SUMMARY

COST/BENEFIT STUDY

Overall Costs

PROJECT CHOICE
EXPENDITURE SUMMARY
($000'S)

Fiscal year ending June 30,	High School Support			Post-Secondary Support			Scholarships	Total Project Choice Expenditures
	Wages	Admin.	Sub-Total	Wages	Admin.	Sub-Total		
1989	$10	$50	$60	$0	$0	$0	$0	$60
1990	140	110	250	0	0	0	0	250
1991	250	220	470	0	0	0	0	470
1992	500	430	930	0	0	0	0	930
1993	350	660	1,010	150	130	280	590	1,880
1994	325	590	915	325	150	475	1,590	2,980
1995	350	190	540	350	80	430	1,330	2,300
1996	200	80	280	590	250	840	2,160	3,280
1997	0	0	0	430	430	860	2,800	3,660
1998	0	0	0	450	400	850	2,100	2,950
1999	0	0	0	470	300	770	1,400	2,170
2000	0	0	0	490	200	690	700	1,390
Grand Totals	**$2,125**	**$2,330**	**$4,455**	**$3,255**	**$1,940**	**$5,195**	**$12,670**	**$22,320**

MRI COST/BENEFIT STUDY

In 1995, Midwest Research Institute (MRI) was commissioned to do a cost-benefit analysis of the Project Choice program for the Kauffman Foundation. In conducting this study, MRI used gender, race and graduation rate data of Project Choice students in the Westport High School class of 1993 and in the class of 1994 for the five Kansas schools involved in Project Choice. As part of the analysis, MRI also gathered syndicated data on national norms for lifetime earning potential of the various gender, race and education levels within the U.S. population.

The study was intended to determine whether or not the Project Choice program (with its goal of motivating students to complete high school) would have a monetary benefit to society in terms of the level of taxes paid by Project Choice "graduates" as compared to individuals who do not complete high school. Though it is understood that the full value of the program (reduced crime, positive behavior, less dependence on public assistance and so on) is clearly more than the simple tax benefit to the community, these other program benefits are intangible in nature and therefore not measurable in the MRI study.

The MRI cost-benefit analysis of one Project Choice graduating class from the Kansas schools and one class from Westport High School did, in fact, establish that there is a fiscal benefit to the community that can be directly attributed to the Project Choice program. The figures show that the 1993 Choice graduates of Westport will contribute $.3 million more to the tax base than students in their class not receiving a high school degree. In the Kansas example, Choice students will also contribute $.3 million more than the same number of students in their class not receiving a degree. As a total program (Kansas and Missouri combined), Project Choice will be responsible for creating about $600,000 in incremental state and local tax revenue from these two graduating classes alone.

Taking the cost of the program into account, MRI found that Choice students would receive incremental earnings during their working life. For each $1 spent by the program on a student at Westport High School, that student will realize $2.15 in earnings. For each $1 spent on a Choice student in the Kansas schools, that student will realize $2.46 in earnings.

Although the MRI cost-benefit analysis sampled one graduating class from each of the two years, the fairly consistent demographic composition of the Project Choice students from cohort to cohort suggests that similar cost-benefit ratios and community tax benefits would be realized across the entire group of Choice participants through the years.

Project Choice Evaluation Reports

YEAR	TITLE
1991	
	Project Choice Evaluation of Program Effectiveness 1988-1990 Report of Students' (Choice and comparison groups in both Missouri and Kansas) grade point averages, absences, standardized test scores, and self-esteem measures since program inception. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice Evaluation of Program Effectiveness 1988-1991 Report of Students' (Choice and comparison groups in both Missouri and Kansas) grade point averages, absences, standardized test scores, and self-esteem measures since program inception. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice Parent Attitudes Demographic information and attitudinal responses concerning the program and its components from parents of Project Choice students. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
1992	
	Project Choice Student Attitudes Attitudinal survey responses concerning the program and its components from Project Choice students. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Qualitative Evaluation Perceptions and Motivation Assessment of students' perceptions concerning the program and the monetary incentive. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Summer Experience 1991-Phase II Descriptive, process and perception information from students about participating in the experiential summer programs. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.

Project Choice Evaluation Reports

	Project Choice Case Studies Inquiries Descriptive and outcome information concerning the impact of the program on selected students and parents. Evaluation conduced by external researchers.
1993	
	Project Choice Executive Summary of Statistical Analysis Report of Students' (Choice and comparison groups in both Missouri and Kansas) grade point averages, absences, standardized test scores, and self-esteem measures since program inception. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice Evaluation Findings from Two 1992 Summer Programs Descriptive, process and perception information from students about participation in the experiential summer programs. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Evaluation Qualitative Evaluation of the 1992 Summer Experience Programs Descriptive and comparative information concerning students' attitudes about their participation in various summer enrichment programs. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Evaluation 1992 Senior Survey Report Descriptive information about students' plans for the future. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Summary of Summer Experience Evaluations from 1991-1993 Descriptive and comparative information concerning campus-based summer experiential programs attended by Project Choice students. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.

	Project Choice Planned vs. Actual Experience Project Choice & Comparison Classes of 1992 Comparison of students' plans and actual post-secondary experiences. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Community Benefits Model Cost-benefit analysis comparing the cost to develop and implement the program to earnings potential of high school graduates and resultant local and state tax revenues. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Evaluation of Project Match (Mentor Assisted Training for Career Help) Descriptive, process and outcome information concerning a program to assist Project Choice students in obtaining summer and part-time school year jobs. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
1994	
	Project Choice Evaluation of Program Effectiveness 1993-94 Report of Students' (Choice and comparison groups in both Missouri and Kansas) grade point averages, absences, standardized test scores since program inception. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice Tech Prep/Vocational Career Fair Students' satisfaction responses concerning participation in vocational career fair. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	AED Evaluation of Project Choice First Annual Report Volume I, II, Executive Summary Descriptive, process and attitudinal responses regarding students' participation in and perceptions about Project Choice, including longitudinal class of 1993. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.

Project Choice Evaluation Reports

	Project Choice Evaluation of Program Effectiveness 1988-89 to 1992-93 Report of Students' (Choice and comparison groups in both Missouri and Kansas) grade point averages, absences, standardized test scores since program inception. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice Follow-Up Survey Class of 1992 Descriptive and attitudinal responses to survey focused on actual post-secondary decisions and experiences from first high school graduating class. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Case Studies of Student Dropouts Description, attitudes, and perceptions from selected group of high school dropouts. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
1995	
	Project Choice Evaluation of Program Effectiveness 1994-95 Report of Students' (Choice and comparison groups in both Missouri and Kansas) grade point averages, absences, standardized test scores since program inception. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice 1994 Tech Prep Summer Work Career Academy Report on students' perceptions concerning program and value related to career choices. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	AED Evaluation of Project Choice Cost Benefit Analysis Abstracts and Articles, Final Reporting Compilation of pertinent findings from literature review.

Project Choice Evaluation Reports

	AED Evaluation of Project Choice Second Annual Report Volume I, II, Executive Summary Descriptive, process and attitudinal responses regarding students' participation in and perceptions about Project Choice, including longitudinal class of 1993. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice Penn Valley Community College College Preparatory Program Description, attitudes and perceptions concerning offerings of the summer college preparatory program from students attending the program. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Big Brothers/Big Sisters Mentoring Program Description, process and outcome of students' participation in a one-on-one mentoring program hosted by Big Brothers/Big Sisters. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.
	Evaluation of Project Choice Participant Surveys Spring, 1993; Spring, 1994 Description and attitudinal responses to annual survey focusing on activities and accomplishments of students as well as plans for their futures. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice Follow-UP Survey Class of 1993 Description and attitudinal responses to annual survey to the longitudinal study class of 1993; focus primarily on activities, accomplishments , perceptions and motivations of students as well as plans for their futures. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice 1995 Tech Prep Academy Summer Program Report on students' perceptions concerning program and value related to career choices. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Process Evaluation of the KC Freedom School Description, perceptions, and process from a select group of Choice post-secondary students' participation in a Freedom School funded by the foundation. Evaluation conducted by internal researchers.

Project Choice Evaluation Reports

1996	
	AED Evaluation of Project Choice Third Annual Report Volume I, II, Executive Summary Descriptive, process and attitudinal responses regarding students' participation in and perceptions about Project Choice, including longitudinal class of 1993. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.
	Project Choice: A Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation Legacy Summary of major evaluation findings since program inception. Report written by internal researchers.
	Project Choice Analysis of Project Choice Outcome Data Descriptive and outcome information on students grade point averages and absences during high school years. Evaluation conducted by external researchers.

EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

PROJECT CHOICE

AGREEMENT BETWEEN_____
AND THE EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

This Agreement is made this _____ day of _____ 19___, by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation (sometimes called "we" or "us" or the "Kauffman Foundation") and _____ (sometimes called "you" or "Student" and _____ and _____ the Parent(s) or legal guardians of Student (referred to in this document as "your Parent(s)"):

BACKGROUND

We wish to recognize and foster the citizenship and academic achievements of students who meet the criteria set forth in this Agreement; and

We want to make a difference in the lives of people who are sincerely interested in continuing their post-high school education; and

We believe that the development of an educational support system for deserving young people which will encourage their academic and social development is essential to a stronger society and to the greater Kansas City community.

We believe further that Project Choice, through assistance in the education of young people, can encourage them to become productive members of our society who, because of better education, can enjoy a higher standard of living and quality of life.

We further believe that excellent opportunities for furthering one's education after high school exists in the City of Kansas City, Missouri and elsewhere within the State of Missouri whether it be at a vocational or technical school or within a college or university setting.

The **Project Choice** Agreement

AGREEMENT

NOW THEREFORE, the parties to this Agreement agree as follows:

1. **We make the following promises:**

   (a) We will pay, for or on your behalf, all tuition, books, academic fees, and reasonable room and board (for schools outside the metropolitan Kansas City area) at the college, university or accredited vocational or other accredited technical school of your choice (subject only to our approval, which we will not unreasonably withhold) to which you are admitted for the fall academic session beginning in August/September, 19___, following fulfillment by you of your obligations described in paragraph 4 of this Agreement.

   (b) Because we believe that excellent educational opportunities exist in the Kansas City, Missouri area and in the State of Missouri, our obligations under the preceding paragraph shall be limited to payments to vocational and technical schools in Kansas City, Missouri or colleges or universities within the State of Missouri, it being understood that we may waive this option and elect to pay for your tuition, books, reasonable room and board, and academic fees at colleges or universities outside of the State of Missouri at our option.

   (c) We will arrange for all of such payments in the form of a scholarship directly to the college, university or accredited vocational/technical school you choose.

2. Our obligations under this Agreement cease if you (a) terminate your education within, or move outside of, that part of the Kansas City, Missouri school district serving Westport High School, (b) voluntarily drop out of Project Choice, (c) are dropped from Project Choice for failure to meet your obligations under paragraph 4, or (d) in any event, eight years after the date of this Agreement.

3. You agree to apply for other scholarship funding, either through the Kauffman Foundation or your school, where such funding is available (as, for example, a Pell Grant) and in the event you are able to obtain other scholarship or academic aid, our obligations to pay for or arrange for the payment of the foregoing expenses shall be secondary obligations, so that the amount of our obligations will be reduced by the amount of the scholarship or other academic aid you receive from other sources.

4. **You agree as follows:**

   (a) You will remain in school at Westport High School.

   (b) You will complete all of the requirements for high school graduation from the Kansas City, Missouri school system in order to graduate with the graduating senior class of Westport High School in the spring of 19___.

   (c) You will maintain an excellent conduct record at school and in the community as outlined in the manual you have received upon enrollment in this program, and you will also avoid disciplinary problems, suspension and expulsion during the remaining term of your stay at Westport High School.

   (d) You will participate in the tutoring program we sponsor on an active basis, and progress at a normal rate and to the best of your ability until graduation.

(e) Throughout the term of this Agreement (that is, during the period of your high school **and** college or vocational/technical school education) you will abstain completely from the use of illegal drugs and you will avoid the excessive use or abuse of alcohol.

(f) As part of your promise to remain drug free, you agree that, at times of our choosing, you will submit to a random test given to determine that your are drug free, and if you fail to pass such test or refuse to consent to such test, at our option, our further obligations under this Agreement shall end.

(g) As part of your promises to avoid the use of illegal drugs and the excessive use or abuse of alcohol, you agree that, if, in our discretion, drugs or alcohol abuse becomes a problem for you during the term of this Agreement, you will participate in a counseling or rehabilitation program and if you fail or refuse to participate in such a program, at our option, our further obligations under this Agreement shall end.

(h) During your years in high school, you will avoid parenthood and attend counseling sessions we require with your high school counselors or with other outside counselors we employ for your benefit.

(i) If you choose to attend a college or university, you will take a minimum of 15 hours of course credit per semester and maintain a grade point average of at least 2.0 (C average) in order to continue under this program. In addition, you agree to complete the college curriculum of your choice within four years after graduation from high school and further agree that, if you have not so completed the college curriculum, at our option, our obligations under this Agreement to further funding of your college or university education may end following the completion of your fourth academic year.

(j) Accredited vocational and technical programs which we would approve include programs in the building trades (carpentry, plumbing, bricklaying, heating and air conditioning, electrical, etc.), automotive technology, fashion merchandising, cosmetology (including manicurist) and computer technology/electronics. These are examples only, and do not include all fields of study which we would find acceptable. If you choose to attend an accredited vocational or other accredited technical school, you will attend such school on a full-time basis, taking the required number of course or credit hours necessary to graduate within the time frame established by that institution for graduation where students attend on a full-time basis. You agree to complete the curriculum at such institution within the period the institution prescribes, and if you have not so completed that curriculum, at our option, our obligations under this Agreement to further funding of your vocational or technical education may end at the conclusion of such period.

5. **By signing below, your Parent(s) hereby promise:**

(a) to participate in the Kauffman Foundation's Project Choice programs;

(b) to monitor your progress through the educational system and with the terms of this Agreement; and

(c) to take an active part in activities we sponsor for your Parent(s), including attendance at meetings with representatives of the Kauffman Foundation, attendance at teacher or counselor conferences which monitor your progress, and participation in parent/teacher association activities at your school.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, this Agreement has been executed by all parties hereto as of the day and year first above written.

EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION

By: _____
Ewing M. Kauffman, Chairman

_____
Student's signature

_____
Parent/Guardian's signature

_____
Parent/Guardian's signature (optional)

THIS IS A BINDING OBLIGATION OF THE EWING MARION KAUFFMAN FOUNDATION AND THE STUDENT. BOTH HAVE SIGNED IT INTENDING TO BE BOUND BY ITS TERMS.

June, 1994

Dear Project Choice Graduate,

CONGRATULATIONS! Your recent graduation from high school marks the beginning of a new era in your life: a time which will be challenging and demanding. We, at Project Choice, are extremely proud of your accomplishments thus far, and want to help you continue your personal educational development.

As you enter the second phase of Project Choice, we feel it is important to review the Project Choice Agreement and the responsibilities associated with your scholarship. Therefore, included with this letter is a packet of information containing the following items:

- Responsibilities of Students and the Foundation
- Two Post-Secondary Consent and Release forms
- Common Questions and Answers
- A self-addressed stamped envelope

After you and your parents have reviewed these documents, please sign **both** Consent and Release forms. Also we ask that you and your parents sign this letter as an indication that you have received the enclosed materials and agree to continue your participation as set forth in your Project Choice Agreement. Please be sure you read the Responsibilities of Student and the Foundation carefully.

Please return the following items in the enclosed envelope:

1. Two Consent and Release forms
2. The second page of this letter signed by both you and your parent

Further payments to the institution you are enrolled in will not be made until these forms have been returned to us. This will result in the loss of classes and the cancellation of your residence hall contract in addition to being ineligible to receive your Project Choice scholarship. If you have any questions regarding this agreement please call Lynn Leonard at 932-1030, Adriana Melgoza at 932-1025, or Andrew Dominguez at 932-1161.

Thank your for your cooperation. We are extremely happy to be able to continue our relationship as you begin your post secondary education.

Sincerely,

Thomas J. Rhone
Director

I have read and reviewed the above-mentioned materials and reaffirm my intent to fulfill the Project Choice Agreement.

_____ _____

Student's Signature Date

_____ _____

Parent's Signature Date

PROJECT CHOICE™

Common Questions and Answers for College-Bound Students

1. **What do I take to college with me?**

How much you bring with you will probably depend on how far away from home you will be. If you won't be able to go home very often, you will want to make a list of all possible things you may need. Below is a list of items most often taken:

Laundry needs:	hangers, detergent, iron
Personal needs:	hair dryer, alarm clock, robe, radio, soap, toiletries
Linens:	towels, sheets, blankets, bedspread
School needs:	dictionary, thesaurus, scissors, stapler, typewriter (if you have one)

2. **What do I do if I don't get along with my roommate?**

Try to be tolerant and talk things out. Most schools require that you finish the year with your roommate, or at least a semester. If you still have problems, consult the dorm resident counselor. There is usually a resident assistant on each floor.

3. **How much time will I need to study?**

There is no set amount of time you MUST study, but you should plan your time well. Students say the first year of college is most difficult. The following hints were given by students:

* Study as soon after class as possible, while the teacher's words are still fresh in your mind. Review your notes before class. READ ASSIGNMENTS BEFORE CLASS.
* Do your most difficult assignments first.
* Take notes in a large notebook and use ink as it is easier to read. Leave a wide margin on each page to go back and summarize or make additions.

4. **If I begin to have trouble in class, what do I do?**

Don't wait until it is too late. Talk to the professor or teaching assistant immediately. He or she may be able to give you hints on how to study for their class.

* Ask your professor or student advisor about getting a tutor.
* See if your campus has a tutoring center.
* Seek help at the Student Affairs Office or Student Life Office on your campus.

5. **Can I work during college?**

It is entirely up to you, but we recommend that you limit your employment to 10 hours per week. A good place to look for work is on the college campus itself. Check with the financial aid office of your school.

6. **Who do I talk to if I need answers to questions, or just need someone to listen?**

Every campus has a counseling center that is free to students. Counselors can provide help with school or personal problems. Additional places to seek help are the Health Center, Minority Affairs Office, Student Support Services or Student Life Office.

7. **What are the basic requirements of me as a Project Choice freshman?**

Students must enroll in <u>and</u> pass 12 credit hours each semester as a freshman with a 2.00 grade point average. Do not drop a class or enroll in fewer classes until Project Choice has been contacted.

PROJECT CHOICE™

Responsibilities of Students and the Foundation

This section outlines the general responsibilities of both the student and the Foundation which are part of the Post-Secondary Agreement. It is important that you understand your obligations as well as our obligation to your continued educational endeavors.

Consent

We believe that keeping a close watch on the academic and social progress of each Project Choice participant is critical to the success of each student. We also believe that parents are a vital partner in this effort. Therefore, we ask each student to give a full written authorization for access to all school records to the Kauffman Foundation, its agents and the student's parents. These records may include information on grades, conduct, housing, financial aid or advisory sessions.

Additionally, students are required to give Project Choice the name of their academic advisors within 10 days of assignment, so that Project Choice staff can monitor each student's progress. It is the student's responsibility to fulfill all requests for information from Project Choice. Any deliberate submission of false information will result in dismissal from Project Choice.

Project Choice has retained the services of Citizens Scholarship Foundation of America (CSFA), a national financial scholarship organization, to process all payments to students and institutions. CSFA will request transcripts and other supporting data from students on a regular basis. The student's full cooperation in providing the requested information is necessary to insure that each student receives the proper funds in a timely manner.

Conduct

Project Choice encourages its students to be ideal citizens. Participating students are expected to maintain excellent conduct in school and in the community. Students must report to Project Choice any violation or misconduct for which the student receives an institutional reprimand, or any arrest leading to a conviction during the term of the agreement. Activities judged inappropriate, fraudulent or illegal will result in immediate dismissal from Project Choice.

Substance Abuse

We believe that substance abuse hinders achievement. Therefore, students are required to abstain completely from the use of illegal drugs and avoid the excessive use or abuse of alcohol. Students are required to submit to random drug tests during the term of this agreement. Positive test results, refusal to take the test, or excessive use or abuse of alcohol will result in immediate dismissal from Project Choice.

Academic Requirements

Students attending colleges or universities must take a minimum of 15 credit hours per semester. All courses must apply toward a degree or fulfill a prerequisite for an applicable course. Students must maintain a 2.0 (C) average. Students must complete their program of study in four years or less. Students who want to enroll in summer programs must receive prior approval from Project Choice.

Students attending accredited vocational or technical schools are required to maintain full-time status and complete their program within the time set forth by the institution. Additionally, students must maintain the equivalent of a "C" average.

The **Project Choice** Agreement

Transfer Policy

Students are expected to investigate schools and academic/occupational fields of interest in order to make the best choice of an institution for post-secondary education. Once a particular school is selected, the student is expected to graduate from that school. Any requests to transfer must be sent in writing to Project Choice.

Scholarships

Students are required to apply for federal and state grants and other grants/scholarships as appropriate. Students must provide to Project Choice a copy of the financial aid package prepared by the school to which they have been admitted. Project Choice will, in turn, make an award to the institution to complete the package. As long as Choice students maintain acceptable GPAs, limited part-time work is not discouraged. However, loans and work/study are not approved options for Project Choice students.

In general, after grants and other awards, Project Choice will provide funds for tuition, academic fees, on-campus dormitory housing, full-meal plan through the cafeteria, and a one-time book purchase per semester (or quarter) through the authorized bookstore.

Money received that does not go toward the cost of tuition, books and academic fees is taxable income to the student. Examples of this taxable income include money for housing, meals and transportation. Each student will receive a written notice of the taxable income they have received after the end of the calendar year.

Transportation

Students who attend institutions that are between 60 and 250 miles from Kansas City will receive a transportation award based on mileage for a maximum of two round trips per year. Students who attend institutions within a 60-mile radius of Kansas City and not living on campus will receive a monthly stipend which is meant to cover the cost of lunch and local transportation to and from school. Students who attend institutions that are in excess of 250 miles from Kansas City will receive an allowance to cover two round trips per year via the least expensive method (i.e. plane, train, bus or private auto, if available.)

Incidental Expenses

Incidental expenses, like laundry, supplies and attendance at sporting events, which occur as a result of the daily activities at school are the responsibility of each student. To cover these expenses, students are expected to earn and save money during summers and vacations. Research has shown that students who work while attending school perform better academically than those who do not. Project Choice does not require students to work, and students who wish to get a job during the school year are strongly urged to limit the number of work hours to 10 per week.

PROJECT CHOICE™

Post-Secondary Consent and Release

The undersigned does hereby consent to (i) participation in Project Choice and any and all activities conducted on behalf of Project Choice, including (without limitation) field trips, athletic contests, concerts, theatrical productions, educational programs and visits to colleges, universities and vocational schools, and (ii) the Student traveling to and from such activities via transportation provided by or on behalf of Project Choice or the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation (the "Foundation").

The undersigned hereby gives Project Choice, the Foundation, its Agents, and the undersigned's parents or guardians full authorization to access all pertinent school records including, but not limited to, grade reports, conduct reports, housing reports, financial aid documents and advisory reports. The undersigned further consents to participate in activities designed to evaluate Project Choice.

The undersigned, in consideration of the activities provided by Project Choice and the Foundation on his or her behalf, hereby releases and forever discharges Project Choice, the Foundation, its officers, directors, agents, and employees and all others acting on behalf of Project Choice and the Foundation (the "Released Parties"), and all of them, from any and all liabilities, claims, demands, actions and causes of action in any way related to any loss or injury that the Student may sustain in connection with participation in Project Choice, or any and all activities conducted by or on behalf of Project Choice. Nothing herein is intended or shall be construed to release any insurance company or any party other than the Released Parties from any liability, claim or demand or any obligation under any insurance policy.

The undersigned has read this Consent and Release, understands its contents and fully agrees to be bound by its terms.

_____ _____

Date Project Choice Participant

_____ _____

Date Parent/Guardian of Project Choice Participant

The **Project Choice** Staff

Tom Rhone has been Senior Director of Project Choice since its inception. A former teacher and high school principal in Kansas City, Kansas, Mr. Rhone did the original research and was part of the team that designed the original Project Choice model.

Gwen Richtermeyer joined the program in 1988 when Westport High School was selected as the first Choice site. She was instrumental in developing the program's results-oriented Saturday School and has been compiling and analyzing the Choice data for the last two years.

Alycia Rodriguez, hired as secretary in 1989, was quickly promoted to take charge of activities and support systems for students and their parents, including meetings, training sessions and workshops, retreats, field trips, and gala celebrations and ceremonies. She also edited *Report Card*, the Project Choice newsletter.

Vicki Lucas joined the Foundation in 1986 to work with Project STAR. She moved over to Choice in 1989 as Home School Coordinator. Her initial role was to assist teachers of the Project Choice classes. That assignment grew to include child advocacy and family support services.

Susan Wally, who has a background in school improvement and reform, joined the Foundation in 1990 as Project Choice Manager. She coordinated the growing staff and designed and managed the school site staff development efforts. Ms. Wally is currently Senior Director of Education for the Foundation's Youth Development Division.

Angelynn Barge joined the Foundation in 1990 as a data evaluator. She collected attendance and suspension information from the high schools. She also documented the drug testing information. In 1993 Barge's responsibilities expanded to include tracking post-secondary financial information and reporting required information to the Citizen Scholarship Foundation of America, Choice's post-secondary fiscal agent. Ms. Leonard is now the Project Choice Manager.

Lynn Leonard joined the Foundation in 1991. She first worked with Project Choice students as the Choice District Coordinator in Kansas and then designed and managed the Choice post-secondary program. Ms. Leonard is now the Project Choice Manager.

Adriana Pecina joined the Foundation in 1991 as a School Family Service Coordinator. She developed the Big Brothers/Big Sisters mentoring component and now works with the Post-secondary Team, visiting colleges and vocational schools and monitoring students' progress and grades.

Leon Franklin served as a Program Coordinator in the School and Family Services unit working with school counselors and administrators, but especially with students and their families. He developed the Tech Prep program and is now a member of the Project Choice Post-secondary Team.

Andrew Dominguez was the last addition to the Project Choice staff. He joined the Post-secondary Team in 1993 to assist in the development of the support systems. He visits students at their respective institutions and serves as liaison with colleges and vocational schools.

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EDITORIAL
Deep appreciation is due the following Kauffman associates: Stacey Daniels and her team members, Lynn Leonard and Gwen Richtermeyer, who worked long hours to assure that all the data in this report are correct; Joy Torchia, who provided graphs, tables, and charts as well as wise counsel; Jennifer Hill, who labored to pull together the complex Choice history; and Tom Rhone, who made it all happen.

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